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Wednesday 2 November 2016

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Mercredi 2 novembre 2016



Speaker
Honourable Dave Levac

Clerk
Todd Decker

Président
L'honorable Dave Levac

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LEGISLATIVE ASSEMBLY OF ONTARIO

Wednesday 2 November 2016

ASSEMBLÉE LÉGISLATIVE DE L'ONTARIO

Mercredi 2 novembre 2016

The House met at 0900.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Good morning. Please join me in prayer.

Prayers.

ORDERS OF THE DAY

ELECTION STATUTE LAW AMENDMENT ACT, 2016

LOI DE 2016 MODIFIANT DES LOIS EN CE QUI CONCERNE LES ÉLECTIONS

Resuming the debate adjourned on November 1, 2016, on the motion for second reading of the following bill:

Bill 45, An Act to amend certain Acts with respect to provincial elections / Projet de loi 45, Loi visant à modifier certaines lois en ce qui concerne les élections provinciales.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Further debate?

Hon. Laura Albanese: I'm pleased to rise this morning to add my voice to Bill 45, the Election Statute Law Amendment Act. In Ontario, we are facing very real challenges when it comes to voter turnout. In the 2014 election, less than 52% of people voted. When it comes to young people, the number is even lower. In the last election, only 34% of youth cast a ballot. We need to address this challenge and encourage more people to participate in their democracy.

That is why we have introduced a bill that would, if passed, modernize the voting process, better engage people and make it easier for them to vote. Most of our proposals were based on the recommendations from Ontario's Chief Electoral Officer. We hope that the opposition will support this bill that will help to modernize Ontario's election system.

As was said by the Attorney General in his initial speech, we want to harness that sense of opportunity and enthusiasm in young people and get them invested in the democratic process early on. If passed, this bill would require the Chief Electoral Officer to create a provisional voter register which 16- and 17-year-olds, future eligible voters, could join before they reach voting age. Once they turn 18 and are of legal age to vote, their information would be automatically transferred to the permanent register of electors.

I believe that this move would have several positive effects. Our bill would increase the number of young, eligible voters who are registered as voters. They are cur-

rently the least likely group of any age to vote. It would also make the voting process even simpler on election day. This change would also give Elections Ontario more opportunity to reach out to young people before they reach the voting age and give youth a concrete action that they could take in response: They could sign up.

When the Chief Electoral Officer recommended this measure, he expressed an interest in working with more high schools to promote education and awareness, among other initiatives. Our government welcomes this effort, and we look forward to seeing what he and his team can come up with.

To be absolutely clear, this change would not change the legal voting age in Ontario. That would remain 18 years of age. We are simply looking to empower Ontarians at an early age to participate in the democratic process.

Mr. Speaker, another component of this bill involves the rules for candidates and canvassers around accessing apartment buildings, condos and other multiple-residence buildings. According to existing rules, candidates and their representatives—

Interjection.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Paul Miller): Thanks so much.

Continue.

Hon. Laura Albanese: Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

However, candidates and canvassers, when they are faced with uncooperative landlords or condominium associations who won't give them access to the buildings, currently have very little recourse. There's really not much they can do. We see that happening especially in urban centres, where we have ridings with many buildings, many condominiums. I think this is a common experience for members of the Legislature and other candidates. This is a problem. Canvassing can be a valuable tool in keeping voters informed and engaged, as you know, Mr. Speaker.

For voters who only engage with the elections through news media, it can be easy to feel removed from the decision-making process and even, at times, disenfranchised. At the same time, one of the biggest challenges currently facing candidates, parties and election officials alike is keeping voters' attention.

Politics, as you know, is often met with cynicism and even indifference. We need to be encouraging a personal approach whenever that is possible. That is why this bill proposes to give the Chief Electoral Officer the ability to enforce the rights of access for candidates and their representatives by imposing administrative penalties. The

local returning officer would have the power to fine a building owner or condominium corporation if a canvasser that is at least 18 years of age was refused access to their building within 24 hours of it being requested.

Interjections.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Paul Miller): There are a lot of sidebars going on, and I can hardly hear the minister. It's not just on the opposition side, but on their own side—ministers talking in front of her while she's talking. Thank you, people.

Continue.

Hon. Laura Albanese: Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

As I was saying, on election day, the 24-hour period would no longer apply, and access would have to be granted immediately.

Our government believes that these rules would better support candidates and canvassers to engage with more voters in their communities.

It is understandable that the residents of these buildings might have concerns about canvassers being allowed into their building. They might worry about their privacy, for example. As with any other situation in which canvassers are going door to door, people have no obligation to speak to them. We want to be respectful of these concerns, and I understand that Elections Ontario plans to do outreach to educate people about their rights and obligations regarding canvassing in affected buildings.

Mr. Speaker, this bill would also allow for the use of certain voting technology in provincial elections, which will enable the Chief Electoral Officer to implement his proposed technology-enabled staffing model. Under the current system, finding a voter on the list and giving them their ballot is done manually. This requires the efforts of both a poll clerk and a deputy returning officer. At the end of the day, votes are also counted by hand. As a result, Elections Ontario requires a lot of staff to conduct an election. In the 2014 general election, for example, approximately 76,000 temporary staff were required.

By introducing technology to replace both of these functions, the Chief Electoral Officer estimates that Elections Ontario could reduce its staffing requirements by 41%. That's a significant step toward improving the efficiency of our election process.

The new staffing model, and the process that was piloted under this model, also provided a more streamlined and positive experience for voters. A whopping 96% of voters who were polled after voting with the technology-enabled model thought that the process was easy with the new technology. Some 91% were in support of the technology being used in future elections.

0910

The remarkable thing about this is how much value we'll be able to get out of two fairly straightforward technologies.

One of these technologies, the e-poll book, replaces the many, many pages of names—and I'm talking about a lot of names on hard-copy pages—that officials currently have to search through to find any given voter.

Instead, they could just scan the voter's notice of registration card. The system would find the voter's name in a fraction of a second and print their ballot. This would save everyone's time and keep everything running smoothly for election officials.

The other tool that's used here is a vote tabulator, which quickly and accurately would count the paper ballot. Votes at the pilot locations had been counted and results were posted on Elections Ontario's website within only 30 minutes from the close of the polls. That is a third of the time—a third of the time—that it took polling locations operating under the current model.

Our government's bill would also make it easier for people to get to polling stations by moving the scheduled election date from fall to spring to take advantage of the longer daylight hours and the warmer weather. However, this also means that it's important to pass all of these measures in a timely manner so that we can give enough time to Elections Ontario to implement them before the new election date. That is why our government is hoping to have our proposals, if passed, take effect by the beginning of next year, in time for the 2018 election.

I support these changes. I believe that it is time to modernize our electoral system. Keeping up with the times makes it easier for the people who we're trying to engage in the process.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Paul Miller): Questions and comments?

Mr. Todd Smith: Good morning, Mr. Speaker. It's a beautiful Wednesday morning out there—kind of mild. It's actually quite warm inside Queen's Park today, but it's nice in the chamber. I'm glad to see you're in a good mood today.

This is a bill that's very important because I think there's a lot of modernization that does need to occur when it comes to our electoral system. There are a number of different issues involved in this bill when it talks about bringing in new technology. We've used the new technology in the most recent by-elections that we've had here in Ontario. I think, for the most part, the technology has worked extremely well. What we want to do is make sure that we encourage the residents of Ontario who are eligible to vote to get out to the polls and vote and make it as easy as we possibly can for them to vote in our elections. After all, it is our democratic right to do so.

But we've seen a lot of things around here, when it comes to this government in power, that are actually banning the democratic process, or at least hurting the democratic process in Ontario. Just yesterday, we saw charges laid against Liberal election operatives. I know it's concerning for a lot of people out there. It's concerning that these officials—officials who are in the Premier's office—then get promoted to work on the central campaign. These are serious, serious charges that need to be dealt with. We need the Premier to answer—

Hon. Deborah Matthews: Speaker, point of order.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Paul Miller): You don't have to yell at me. I was in conversation. Yes, what can I do for you?

Hon. Deborah Matthews: I tried for some time to get your attention, Speaker.

I just want to remind the member that speaking to the bill is what we're here to do today.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Paul Miller): Actually—thank you for your point of order—I feel that the member is in line because he is discussing elections, and some of the stuff that went on was involved with elections. Thank you.

Continue.

Mr. Todd Smith: I just want to wrap up by saying that I think it's important that we do modernize the system and that we protect the democracy that we covet here in Ontario.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Paul Miller): Questions and comments?

Mr. Percy Hatfield: I see some military personnel in the gallery today. Thank you for your service. Thank you for coming to Queen's Park today.

Speaker, we're hearing a lot these days about trying to encourage a larger voter turnout, but I see nothing in this bill that, let alone Internet voting, would allow us to vote over the telephone, for example. Of municipalities in Ontario, 97 of the 444 had Internet voting in the last municipal election. A lot of them do it with telephone voting as well, or paper ballots and polling stations—nothing in here.

I know that in the town of Leamington, they had Internet and telephone voting methods for municipal and school board elections in 2014. Tecumseh just did a by-election to replace my friend ward 2 councillor Mike Rohrer, who passed away suddenly and unexpectedly a few months ago. Congratulations to our new councillor, Bill Altenhof. The ward 2 turnout, using telephone and Internet voting in the by-election, was 42%. During the general election in 2014, Tecumseh's ward 2 had a voter turnout of 58%, compared to the town's average of 52.5%. So the by-election turnout of 42% was great, compared to that of by-election turnouts elsewhere.

People are easily engaged and encouraged to vote when you make it easy and convenient for them to do so. That's why I'm surprised that when it comes to technology, we're only talking about counting ballots with vote tabulators in this bill, as opposed to the different ways we could make it easier for people across Ontario to cast a ballot.

I would encourage, when this bill gets to committee, the Wynne Liberals to finally take it upon themselves to look at the technology, embrace the technology and do what municipalities in Ontario have been doing since 2003.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Paul Miller): Deputy Premier.

Hon. Deborah Matthews: Well, thank you, Speaker, and good morning. I really want to take this opportunity to talk about voter turnout, particularly youth voter turnout.

I often say to young people that if they voted in the same proportion as their parents and grandparents, our

political platforms might look a little bit different. You see, voter turnout is not much more than 50% now, but youth turnout is only 34%. Only one in three young people are voting. That's just not a good thing, because their thoughts, their opinions, their ideas are not as front-of-mind for people putting together the platforms as they should be. So there's huge untapped political power in our young people.

What this bill does is allow 16- and 17-year-olds to pre-register so that when they turn 18, they will automatically go on the voters list. It means Elections Ontario will be able to communicate with them.

Speaker, I think we all have to turn our attention to how we can increase voter turnout amongst young people in particular: encouraging political involvement, inviting young people to be part of our campaigns, inviting young people to be part of a community of interest that we proactively meet in our communities. That's what we need to do.

This bill alone is not going to solve that problem, but it is a step in the right direction. I urge all members to think about how they can increase voter participation amongst young people, amongst everyone, and, as I say, support this bill because it does move us in the right direction.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Paul Miller): Questions and comments?

Mr. Victor Fedeli: I appreciate the opportunity to chat. I do have some time later on this morning to chat about something in detail, and when I discuss this bill, I do want to talk about the Far North Electoral Boundaries Commission. I'm going to spend my time later really digging into that, because it's something that perhaps a lot of people in the GTHA would not be aware of. I'm going to take my time then to chat about the Far North and northern Ontario and the implications of this. So I'm going to use that time then.

In the time I have now, I do want to talk about the voting day itself. It is proposed to be moved to the first Thursday in June. Speaker, in general, none of this bill really has anything to do with voter turnout—with affecting a positive voter turnout.

0920

I want to focus on that Thursday in June, the 7th, one year, seven months and five or six days from now. That will mean, because there is an opportunity for the Auditor General to report to the Legislature six months before an election day with her audit of our numbers, that moving the date of the election to June 7 precludes the auditor from coming forward with an audit. We will not have an audit of the government's numbers before this election.

Mr. Todd Smith: I'm sure that's just a coincidence.

Mr. Victor Fedeli: Yes, I'm sure it's a coincidence, as well.

That's alarming, Speaker. There is no way, physically, technically or mathematically, for the auditor to do that.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Paul Miller): The Minister of Citizenship and Immigration has two minutes.

Hon. Laura Albanese: I want to thank all of the members who commented, specifically the member from Prince Edward–Hastings. He spoke about encouraging people to participate in elections and making it easier in general for residents to vote and modernizing the system. I'm glad to hear that he's in agreement with that.

The member from Windsor–Tecumseh spoke about telephone voting and Internet voting, which are all great ideas.

Again, as our Deputy Premier and MPP for London North Centre said, I see this as a step in the right direction. I know it doesn't speak specifically to those issues, but most of the proposals were recommendations from our Chief Electoral Officer, and he is the province's electoral authority. If we can start modernizing the system, I'm sure that we'll look at other initiatives that are already being used in some municipalities, as you indicated.

The fact that only one in three young people are voting at the moment is an issue. We want to engage the new generations and not take what we have, this precious democracy, for granted. We have to engage them earlier, perhaps. I think that the idea of pre-registering them before they finish school may spark their interest and hopefully will get more of them interested in finding out what's going on in elections and polls, because they will feel that they will have the right to vote soon.

I also want to thank the MPP for Nipissing. He did specify that he is going to speak more about the provisions for northern Ontario. I look forward to hearing what he has to say in regard to that.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Paul Miller): Further debate?

Mr. John Yakabuski: It's a pleasure to join the debate on Bill 45 this morning. I had the opportunity in 1975, after I turned 18, to register my first vote on September 18, 1975, and I had the pleasure and the honour of voting for my father in the provincial election of that year. After that vote, I never missed another one, be it federal, provincial or municipal. I never missed a vote, because I considered it not only my right and privilege but a responsibility, as a citizen of this wonderful, great country, to vote whenever I was given the opportunity to do so. I think that if people thought that way, we would have a much higher voter turnout.

Our voter turnouts are low primarily because we do not motivate the voter to get out and vote. Our voter turnouts keep dropping, and there's nothing in this bill, including the early registration of young people—which I think is a good thing to do—that is actually going to encourage people to get out and vote.

I want to talk about a young man—I'll get back to this a little later; I don't know how much time I'll have. On Friday evening, I was at the Warden's Banquet in Renfrew county. Warden Peter Emon, after a four-year term, will not be standing for warden this year. He's also finishing up this year as chairman of the Eastern Ontario Wardens' Caucus. He has been a tremendous Renfrew county representative for the past four years and we're

very proud of the work that Peter has done. I want to congratulate him and thank him for the commitment that he made not only to the people of Renfrew county, but also to the people of eastern Ontario as the chair of the Eastern Ontario Wardens' Caucus.

But at that wardens' banquet, we were piped in by a young man from Renfrew, Emilio Sebastian, 16 years old, playing the bagpipes and piping us in. That's probably not that unique. But what was unique was chatting with Emilio and finding out that he and his family came here from Colombia.

Emilio wants to be a politician, and yes, we all wonder about that sometimes. However, I think what motivates Emilio—and having met him there, I told him I want to have a sit-down with him at some point, because I believe that it will be an interesting opportunity for both of us to bounce some things off one another. But I would believe something that might motivate Emilio is the difference in our political system versus the one in Colombia, as he and his family probably see.

Ours is not perfect. Let's not kid ourselves. But our democracy is strong and our democracy works, unlike the systems in many other countries. So I think people who come from other parts of the world look at our system and say, "God bless Canada. How fortunate they are to have a system that allows people to vote freely, vote with their conscience and vote in the way that they believe best serves the interests of their country and their community."

That isn't always the case in every other country—not every other country, I should say, but in many countries. In many countries, every time there's an election, the headlines are about the corruption that has taken place during that voting process. We fortunately don't have that kind of an issue in the voting process here. Our elections, as much as we can possibly understand or show, are run in a fair and legal and honest manner. And I think that's very, very important.

So people coming from other countries would look at our system and say, "It's wonderful that we have a system that works here." And I think it is important that we are continuously upgrading and updating the system that works. I see our military men and the folks in the gallery here today, and it is much to their credit that we have a political system in this country and in the western democracies that works, because of the sacrifices that they and those before them have made.

But I do believe it is important that we are continuously updating our systems to mesh with the times that we are living in. One of the changes that is proposed in this bill is voting machines or voting tabulators, or whatever you want to call them. I think that's a great idea. I think there's no reason why people should wait until three hours after the polls are closed to be able to determine who they've elected as their provincial representative here in the province of Ontario or in any given riding.

Speaker, I'm sure the people in Hamilton East–Stoney Creek would like to know as soon as possible who their representative is. I know the people in my riding of

Renfrew–Nipissing–Pembroke would want to know as quickly as possible as well, so those changes I support, absolutely. But I want to point out that when we have tried to make changes in our system to encourage people to vote, we have failed every time—we have failed every time. In 2011, we had 10 days of advance-poll voting in Ontario and turnout dropped dramatically. We make it as convenient as possible to vote, but the turnout drops.

You have to ask yourselves, what are we doing as parliamentarians—not just as parliamentarians, but what are we doing as politicians—that discourages people from getting out and exercising their democratic right?

In my opinion, the two main reasons people will vote are the players in the game, who are primarily the party leaders of the day, and the issues that are being debated during that election campaign. They're not voting because we make the hours longer. We've extended the hours of voting; voter turnout goes down. We used to end at eight o'clock; election polls shut down at eight o'clock. Now they're nine o'clock, and the voting turnout doesn't go up. We give more days for advance polls, and the voting turnout doesn't go up. It's what happens during those campaigns: who the primary combatants are, what their message is and the issues of the day.

0930

If the voter is motivated to get out and vote, they will vote. It's not changing rules. It's not making it easier. It's not giving them a ride. You could give out free gift certificates; if they're not motivated to get out and vote—I know the Premier likes gift cards. I remember, during the ice storm in Toronto, she was handing them out like candy floss. But if you don't motivate the voters to vote, they won't be getting out to vote. It's up to the leaders and it's up to the policy platform people to put out issues and develop platforms that motivate the voters so that they're interested in voting.

Having said that, I know that the young man I spoke about, Emilio Sebastian from Renfrew, will be getting out to vote as soon as he can. He's 16 years old. I'm sure he'll be one of those early registrants, because he'll want to be on that permanent voters list as early as possible. I'm just hoping that he doesn't get too interested in politics too soon because I'd like to have a little more time here myself. I know that he's a motivated young man. Maybe I can get him to work on my team, in the meantime, as he prepares for someday, possibly, seeking election to this Legislature himself or some other elected body. I do want to see that kind of interest. The young people are the ones that will be the leaders of tomorrow. To have them motivated to be interested is a wonderful thing. I'm glad that a young man like Emilio shows that interest.

I'm sure some of the pages here, who would be younger than him, are already cultivating a political interest themselves. That's one of the reasons that they would have applied to be a page in this chamber: because they have an interest in the political system and the political to-and-fro that goes on in this chamber and in how the whole system works. We want to have our young people

interested and committed to being part of the system—not just something on the periphery, on the outside, where we talk about young people, but then they never go out and vote.

It's up to us. It's up to us to make sure that our leaders and the issues that we talk about in the campaign are the ones that motivate young people and people of all ages to get out and vote. That's how we're going to increase the voter turnout in elections. Back in my dad's day, when he was first elected in 1963, we would have had 70%—well, in Renfrew county we would have had 80%, but all across Ontario, it would have been somewhere in the high sixties or seventies. We need to get back there; 100% would be the goal.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Paul Miller): Questions and comments?

Mr. Percy Hatfield: It's always a pleasure to follow the member from Renfrew–Nipissing–Pembroke. He mentioned our military veterans in the chamber today. Again, welcome to all of you, and thank you for your service. I see a lot of members of the Legion up there. As a proud 30-year member of Branch 255 up in Windsor, I say welcome to my Legion comrades as well.

The member also spoke about Peter Emon, the warden of Renfrew and the chair of the eastern wardens' caucus. I would like to echo the member's comments of what a great job Peter has done for eastern Ontario with the wardens' caucus. Also, he's been a very strong voice for municipal representatives right across Ontario.

The member talked about the vote tabulators. They used them in the by-election in Whitby–Oshawa, and they got an early result. I see nothing wrong with that. They want to spread the easy way of counting ballots across Ontario into all of our ridings, and I see nothing wrong with that. Of course, the downside of that—like when you're in factory and you replace workers with robots—is that you don't have as many people working. Many of us know dozens of people who like to earn a few extra dollars during an election by working as poll clerks or whatever during the election. There aren't going to be as many when we go to vote tabulators. A lot of people who used to enjoy a few extra dollars won't be able to get them.

So my suggestion to the Wynne Liberals is to take all of those people, turn them into enumerators, get them out into the ridings, and come up with a voters list that actually means something. Right now, the voters list is a piece of—it's not worth the paper it's printed on, Speaker, as you well know. It's not worth taking it to the outhouse and using it; it is useless. We need to improve that. Let's use the people who won't be in the polling stations and get them to update the voters list.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Paul Miller): Thank you to the member. The member was very descriptive.

The Minister of Agriculture, Food and Rural Affairs.

Hon. Jeff Leal: I did listen intently to the remarks this morning from my colleague the member from Renfrew–Nipissing–Pembroke. I too would like to welcome our veterans here today.

If I can digress for a moment: in terms of Bill 45, it was the great sacrifices of the veterans that allow us the great privilege to serve in public life. I just want to note that when I had the opportunity to be in Hong Kong in April 2015, there was a young man from Pembroke, Ontario. His name was Private Dupont. He served with the Royal Rifles of Canada. He joined that regiment in September 1939 at 16 years of age. When I visited his marker, he was killed in Hong Kong at 18 years of age, on Christmas Eve, to be exact, December 24, 1941. I think all of us should take the time to remember that. It really is part of Bill 45, because if they hadn't made those great sacrifices many, many years ago, none of the 107 members in this chamber would ever have had the privilege that we have today to exercise our democracy in this chamber. That's always very important for us to remember as we get closer to November 11.

There are many good provisions. We mentioned Peter Emon, who I know very well. This really is the opportunity to overhaul the election apparatus in the province of Ontario.

All of us have a real interest—it doesn't matter what side we're on—to get greater turnout. Mr. Speaker, you well know that it's abysmal in municipal elections across the province of Ontario. In many communities, if you get 25% turnout, that is a high-water mark. I think that's distressing for us all. Anything we can do, as part of Bill 45, to increase participation in our democracy, to make it more healthy, is exactly the right thing to do.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Paul Miller): Questions and comments?

Mr. Randy Hillier: I want to just mention as well that I'm looking forward to the House, later today, recognizing the admirable service. I believe we have a bill or a motion in the House about recognizing Remembrance Week, which will happen today in honour of our serving members, and veterans as well.

Speaking on Bill 45, I want to comment on the member from Renfrew–Nipissing–Pembroke's debate. There's nothing in this bill that will improve voter turnout. We've heard from the Liberal members that this is all about improving voter turnout, but there's actually nothing in the bill that will achieve that. Moving the election date is not going to do it. Having tabulated machines is not going to improve voter turnout.

There are many good housekeeping measures in this bill—technical amendments and improvements. But with every Liberal bill, whether it be housekeeping or otherwise, they always sweep in a few more nasty little bits in the bill as well. With this one, what it does is remove the initial blackout period on by-elections, which is there to prevent the government from having an undue advantage of advertising for unscheduled elections or for by-elections. Maybe the Minister of Agriculture, Food and Rural Affairs will speak to why they're being stealthy in giving the government an advantage on that.

There are other elements as well which are nasty little bits. The administrative monetary penalty which will be imposed on building owners if their building is closed

and the canvasser or the candidate is prevented from access to a multi-unit residential building: An automatic administrative penalty gets imposed. These are some nasty bits which have nothing to do with voter turnout but does give the government some added revenues and some added stealthy things—

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Paul Miller): Thank you.

Questions and comments?

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Mr. Michael Mantha: As the member from Windsor–Tecumseh indicated, I too will be spending a lot of time with my comrades over the next week at many Remembrance Day events, and I want to thank them for joining us here today. Every time I see you, you're an inspiration. I enjoy walking up to you. I particularly enjoy the auxiliary ladies. You get a bunch of them together in a room and they really make this young MPP turn red at times. The stories that they have—wow, I tell you, they shy you quite well.

The member from Renfrew–Nipissing–Pembroke brought up a few really good points. How do we engage? Or, particularly, how do we engage youth voter turnouts with some of the changes that the government is proposing in this bill? I agree with a lot of the comments that he made. How do you engage these young minds, future leaders that we have—not only the young minds but just the general public—when the headlines in the papers are all about corruption, are all about scandals, are all about the problems that we're having and misspent money? How can you bring those individuals in to getting involved when they can't relate to those stories? They see it and they just shake their heads and say, "How could they be so irresponsible in doing so?"

I hope I will get an opportunity to speak to this bill, but knowing the track record of this government, they're going to close debate on this. I want to talk about the responsibilities of the Chief Electoral Officer and the Far North Electoral Boundaries Commission, and how I want to raise a particular issue. I know the member from Nickel Belt talked about the community of Wahnapitae in her area, but I also want to raise a point about a community north of my riding which is just outside of the boundaries of the Algoma district that I represent, the community of Manitouwadge. I think there's a message that will be coming from the mayor that this government needs to hear.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Paul Miller): The member from Renfrew–Nipissing–Pembroke has two minutes.

Mr. John Yakabuski: I appreciate all the members' comments.

I want to go back a little bit to my father with the veterans here. My father landed at Normandy, fought in the Battle of Caen, and was very proud of his military service but didn't talk a lot about it.

I was listening to a speech that he made in 1977 at a church on Canada Day. He talked about how—he described it as a slip trench; he described it as a hole that was dug when you were under fire from the enemy. He

said that in a slip trench is where you realized that there is only one God and he's there for us all.

In that speech he also talked about—and I can tell you this because I was the recipient of many of those talks—how he would tell his children, and I'm one of 14 children, as you people in this Legislature know—it would always revolve around when food was being served at the table. He would tell his children how blessed we were and how thankful we should be to live in this country as opposed to so many other places in the world.

When we talk about our democracy and we talk about our system—and there are always things that we can do to improve our system, but we are fortunate to live in a great democracy like Canada and in this province of Ontario. We have to ensure that as we protect this democracy, we always give the people who make it up, who make the democracy, the best opportunity and the best reasons to vote for us.

As people who serve in this chamber, we've got to give them reasons to believe that the process and the system work, because we do so much sometimes to make people cynical about politics, to make them believe that we're just here for our own good. We need to change people's minds about how they feel about politics and politicians. Young people like Emilio Sebastian will help that, but I think the job starts with us.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Paul Miller): Before I move on to further debate, I would like to take this moment to welcome the veterans, the members who are serving now and also members of the Legion. What you've done and the sacrifices you've made over the years have made this country stronger and free. We appreciate what you've done.

This particular time of the year is very important to me personally, too. Five members of my family fought in World War II—three in the navy, two in the air force—and we were one of the fortunate families: They all came back. They saw action. My one uncle was shot down twice. My other uncle was sunk in the north Atlantic on convoy duty and made it. We were very lucky, but many people weren't. The sacrifices you make, day in and day out, to keep us free are much appreciated. Thank you so much.

Applause.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Paul Miller): Further debate?

Ms. Teresa J. Armstrong: It's a good segue that the member from Renfrew—Nipissing—Pembroke just gave me. He talked about how we need to give reasons for motivating and inspiring people to vote for their representatives, because we aren't here for ourselves. We are here to make sure that the legislation that comes forward, which we create or we debate, is working for the people. He mentioned how cynical people sometimes are about the process. But when you are elected and have that honour and that privilege to be your constituents' voices, you certainly realize that you are here for the collective voices in your riding that have put their trust in you, to ensure that legislation is the best that it can be. As the

party on this side, that's one of the things that we like to do, as we like fulsome debate.

Part of democracy, Speaker, is having fulsome debate and allowing each member of this House to speak on bills. The government's track record isn't always that good. They do like to close debate down very quickly on very important legislation, which doesn't always give us that opportunity.

But today I rise to lend my voice to Bill 45, An Act to amend certain acts with respect to provincial elections. I like the fact that the government is attempting, with this bill, to legislate a number of recommendations sought by the Chief Electoral Officer over the past several years and noted in his annual reports. I am also very much in favour of increasing the representation of First Nations communities in both voting and participation in this Legislature. In fact, I think we can all agree that this particular initiative is long overdue.

We hail democracy as the best form of government because it is the only one that recognizes and protects the fundamental values of each individual. Participating in an election is the most essential entryway into any democratic system and it is imperative that we actively seek out groups that are underrepresented and those who experience difficulty in exercising their right to vote. That, I think, is something we need to do better, because we do have such a diverse country; there are many groups in our communities that are underrepresented. But we must do more than just seek them out. We need to find ways to implement educational and informational programs to make the process better known to the public. We also need to find ways to improve on current electoral resources, like outdated and duplicative voters lists and polling capabilities.

But for now, Speaker, I want to turn my comments towards the outreach to Ontario's aboriginal people. Too many people falsely believe that aboriginal people received the right to vote back in 1960. The fact is that most "status Indians" received the unconditional right to vote in 1960, the Inuit received the right to vote in 1950, and still other aboriginal people, such as Métis and non-status Indians, received the vote alongside other Canadians. However, this history of aboriginal voting rights in this country is not one for celebration. The terms of the Indian Act required status Indians to become "enfranchised" in order to obtain the right to vote, meaning they had to give up their status as Indians. They actually had to deny their cultural identity in order to be entitled to participate in our democracy.

Our federal government extended that franchise on several occasions. In 1885, the federal franchise was provided to status Indians in eastern Canada who met the existing requirements for exercising the franchise. This was revoked in 1898. The franchise was extended to status Indian servicemen in both world wars. During the First World War, however, veterans lost their right to vote when they returned to the reserve. This was remedied in 1920 when the franchise was extended to all veterans.

In 1944, the franchise was provided to both veterans and their spouses, regardless of whether they were living on or off the reserves. In 1950, the federal franchise was again extended to any status Indians in exchange for their tax-exemption status.

In 1960, the franchise was extended to all status Indians without any qualification or any need to enfranchise.

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It should be noted that other groups were excluded from the franchise, including women and ethnic and religious minorities such as Chinese and the Mennonites. However, the fundamental difference between the franchised groups and the aboriginal groups was that aboriginal people did not seek it out.

When they were finally granted the right to vote, aboriginal people did not celebrate. That, to me, is a vital piece of information that needs to be understood by anyone attempting to forge new relationships with our aboriginal communities. We share a highly traumatic, problematic and discriminatory history with our aboriginal community, most of which has yet to find proper redress, and that history will and must inform our approach, our expectations for success and our outreach efforts. It will be front and centre for aboriginal groups, and we must respect the past we damaged to forge a future ahead together.

That is my primary concern with this bill: While noble in effort, the approach it takes is highly problematic. You—this government—have only addressed two ridings for consideration, yet you have ignored the fundamental facts in which Ontario's aboriginal communities are located, gather and engage.

Firstly, there are significant aboriginal communities throughout all ridings of northern Ontario, including Thunder Bay—Superior North, Thunder Bay—Atikokan, Nickel Belt, as well as Algoma—Manitoulin. Therefore, basically I'm highlighting the fact that when these things, these committees, are constructed, we have to remember the past in order to develop a way that balances the future.

We also talk about engagement of youth. Many of us here today are familiar with Samara Canada. They are an organization dedicated to reconnecting citizens to politics. They are a trusted, non-partisan champion of increased civic engagement and a more positive public life. Samara commissioned a report called *Message Not Delivered*, analyzing the myth of youth apathy in political participation. One of the key findings of the report was that almost half of all youth had not been contacted by a political party directly, compared to three quarters of older voters.

Samara also worked with Elections Canada on their National Youth Survey Report, which showed that among young people, the likelihood of voting was 15 percentage points higher for those who were directly contacted by a political party or candidate than for those who were not contacted directly.

A central challenge with youth engagement is that youth are harder to contact than their older counterparts. This makes voter identification, an essential task for effective outreach, even more difficult. However, it is unlikely that the two reasons why identification is made more difficult will change: youth mobility patterns and the lack of land-line phones. This means that we all need to find new and engaging ways to reach our youth, otherwise there will be consequences. Over the last 30 years, Canadians have watched with concern as voter rates among younger people have declined. We don't want that to continue as a trend.

I want to finish off by saying that the veterans who are here, the soldiers who have fought for us as individuals, us as a country and us as a province in order to have the rights and freedoms that we have today—for me, that's enough inspiration to make sure that I exercise my vote every day. They fought for those rights for us, and I think connecting young people to the veterans who are here, the service persons who have fought for these rights that we are able to enjoy, makes us proud.

Coming up on Remembrance Day on November 11, I will be visiting all my legions as fast as I can get there, participating in our Remembrance Day celebrations, and I think that's a really crucial time. We can take that opportunity for outreach to youth and really stress what we fought for, what the people here have fought for, and that's allowing us to have freedom of speech, allowing us to vote.

I hope that that message can get to young people during the week of Remembrance Week, because I think, Speaker, that once you know something can be taken away from you, you will stand up and exercise that right to vote.

I want to thank the people here today for standing up and fighting for our right to be able to vote in this great country.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Paul Miller): Questions and comments?

Mr. Ted McMeekin: I always enjoy the sharings of the honourable member from London—Fanshawe. She invariably takes a slightly different approach than reading the bullet points that our partisan people supply us with every time we come into the House. I'm going to depart from mine, as well, just to say I appreciate your focus on youth and the aboriginal brothers and sisters and the importance of finding ways to ensure that they're engaged.

The only way people are going to change things is by getting engaged. You can't sit on the sidelines and then just be critical; you need to be engaged. There are two kinds of people in the world: those who make a noise and those who make a difference. If you want to make a difference, you've got to be engaged.

I too am pleased to see the veterans out this morning. Thank you for coming. It's a delight. I spent some time with the peacekeepers in Cyprus many, many years ago when I was a much younger man. It's good to see you here.

I want to talk a bit to the issue of history guiding us so that we can be more fully engaged. Youth engagement is important. I come from a riding that, in the last three elections, had the highest voter turnout in Ontario. There's a reason for that: We are proactive about engaging people, especially our young people. A number of advisory committees—I think there are six or seven—meet three or four times a year on different topics. You don't have to be a Liberal to participate. In fact, we welcome everybody. It works. People come out. And I spend a couple of days on campus at Mac every month. By trying to be engaged with young people, they, in turn, reciprocate by being more willing to get engaged in the political system, and the member has highlighted that. Thank you for that.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Paul Miller): Questions and comments?

Mr. Rick Nicholls: Again, it's an honour to be able to rise in this Legislature today and talk to Bill 45, the Election Statute Law Amendment Act.

A couple of things: First of all, we're talking about moving towards electronic voting. That certainly will speed up the process, and it will eliminate, perhaps, human error. Although we do know that to make a mistake requires a person, but to make a real big mistake requires a computer.

I'm concerned about privacy. Donald Trump—it's interesting how he comments, and he says, "You know, they're going to fix this election," and whatnot. My concern is, of course, to ensure—and it's the Chief Electoral Officer's duty and responsibility to ensure that the machines are actually accurate and are going to be doing what they're intended to do.

I do like the provision in here with regard to getting young people on the election—giving them a chance to register. My only concern with that is, of course, at 16 and 17, we know where they are, but when they get off to university, we don't know where they are. Will they be followed? Will we know where they are so they can register and vote and so on, and have those particular lists accurate? That is another concern that we do have as well. Elections Ontario is to provide us with these election lists and, of course, how accurate are they? Perhaps, as has been pointed out by the member from Windsor-Tecumseh, we need to put people to work to ensure that these lists are accurate, because that poses a big problem for all members in this Legislature as well. So I do like that.

I think that the permanent register of electors needs to be—oh, my time is almost up. With that, Speaker, thank you very much. Perhaps I'll get a chance a little bit later on.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Paul Miller): Questions and comments?

Mr. Michael Mantha: With the present government that we have and them shutting down debate on many bills and not providing us with the opportunity to speak wholesomely about the issues that are going on, I think it's important that I get a few comments in on this par-

ticular bill, particularly for the community of Manitouwadge and the mayor in Manitouwadge, who has approached the government-side member from Thunder Bay—Superior North on various occasions.

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During the last federal redistribution of boundaries, there was a discussion that a community in the far north of my area looked at being moved over into Thunder Bay—Superior North. The rationale behind it—and don't get me wrong, Mr. Speaker; I never want to lose my constituents out of Manitouwadge. I've built a great relationship with them. There are wonderful people there, and I always enjoy going back to that community. It's not because they're underserviced, because I'm there often and I always enjoy it. They always take good care of me, and they receive me quite warmly in the community.

However, the point that the mayor and his councillors are trying to make is that their community services, as far as the local health integration network, come from the northwest. All of my other communities are serviced by the North East LHIN. That's one of their issues. Because everybody feeds in to the Thunder Bay area, it just makes logical sense for them to be considered in that area.

The second point is their school boards. Their school boards are also towards the west. Some of them do fall in my area, but the issues are split amongst the others. It's an issue that the mayor has been raising for quite some time. Unfortunately, through the Far North Electoral Boundaries Commission, we won't have time to have this discussion at all because they're not going to permit any of these discussions. I had to get that in because I don't know, with this government, when they're going to shut down debate on this one too.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Paul Miller): The minister responsible for women's issues and accessibility.

Hon. Tracy MacCharles: Good morning, Speaker. I am pleased to provide some brief comments on the bill.

Yesterday when I spoke to the bill, the focus of my discussion was on the piece here that would allow 16- and 17-year-olds to pre-register. Coincidentally, I have someone with me here in the House who is approaching that age range. It is Stephanie Hintermeister, who's in the gallery here. She is a student in the Scarborough side of my riding. She goes to Joseph Howe. Today is actually "take your grade 9 student to work" day, Speaker. While Stephanie is not my child, she is the wonderful child—young adult—of a very good friend of mine, Cathy Vanderkolff, who will be here in the Legislature later today.

Steph and I had a conversation on the way in this morning about what you can do in Ontario when you're 16. We talked about the positive things and maybe the not-so-positive things, like being able to smoke cigarettes and buy cigarettes. But you can drive a car, you are covered under age-of-protection laws for child welfare, and you can get your driver's licence. These are some of the great things about being 16.

We know that the youth turnout for voting here in Ontario is far lower than the average turnout. We talked yes-

terday in debate about different ways that youth can currently get involved. But going forward, this bill will provide the enhanced ability to engage youth early, get them on those voters lists, and allow them to have a stronger voice in the things that affect their daily living, whether it's education or social services and so on.

Welcome, Stephanie, to the Legislature. It's great that you're here to observe this particular debate and so many of us talking about the role of youth in Ontario.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Paul Miller): The member from London—Fanshawe: two minutes.

Ms. Teresa J. Armstrong: I'd like to thank the members from Chatham—Kent—Essex, Algoma—Manitoulin, Ancaster—Dundas—Flamborough—Westdale, and of course, the minister responsible for women's issues and responsible for accessibility issues.

The minister brought up a very good point: what privileges and what rights a 16-year-old person has in our province. One thing she didn't list was the right to vote. I thought maybe that's kind of what she was implying.

I also think education is really important, because when you're earning that privilege to vote, as we are talking about—and it is certainly a privilege to have—we need to understand the issues and how democracy works. Teaching our young people early in education and through, as I mentioned just a little while ago, Remembrance Week and what it means to have this right to vote, how significant it is and how we must learn about our democracy and participate in the political process in order to have our voices heard—engaging youth, I think, is a wonderful thing for us to talk about and promote. They will be our future.

I do want to just mention quickly, on a personal note: My granddaughter started junior kindergarten. She's four years old. Their school is going to have a Remembrance Day ceremony. The junior kindergarten and the senior kindergarten class will come together and have a Remembrance Day ceremony. She was asked to speak and say a few words at that ceremony—at four years old. Of course they give her the words, but starting that young and having those celebrations of Remembrance Day, talking about democracy and what it's like to vote—I think you can't start young enough.

I just wanted to say that I think it's a great thing we're talking about, engaging youth, but we actually need to take some action as well.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Paul Miller): Further debate? The Minister of Innovation, Science—

Hon. Reza Moridi: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Yes, Minister of Research, Innovation and Science, and the MPP for Richmond Hill.

It's a great pleasure to stand in the House and to speak to Bill 45, the Election Statute Law Amendment Act. Mr. Speaker, this bill allows the use of certain voting technology in provincial elections, which will enable the Chief Electoral Officer to implement his proposed technology-enabled staffing model.

As we know, technology has improved enormously in the past decades, and when it comes to voting and elec-

tions, we haven't been using adequately the potential which technology provides for us. Based on this bill, the Chief Electoral Officer will be enabled to implement his proposed technology-enabled staffing model in future elections.

Under the current system, finding a voter on the list and giving them their ballot is done manually. This requires enormous effort on the part of polling clerks and also the deputy returning officers, and indeed the returning officers. At the end of the day, Mr. Speaker, all votes are counted manually. As a result, Elections Ontario requires a lot of staff in order to run elections.

In the past general election, in 2014, Elections Ontario recruited 76,000 staff in order to run the election—and these are temporary staff, so you can imagine how it would be difficult on the part of Elections Ontario and the returning officers in 107 ridings. In the future there will be more than 120 ridings—almost, on average, 700 staff per riding. It's not going to be an easy job—and it wasn't. If you use technology in these cases, of course that is going to reduce the number of staff which are required to run our elections properly.

Based on this technology, Mr. Speaker, the Chief Electoral Officer estimates that the number of staff required to run general elections will be reduced by over 40%. That is a very huge reduction in the number of staff required to run the election.

The new staffing model and the process that was piloted in Whitby—Oshawa—this is the last by-election, in Whitby—Oshawa—provided a more streamlined and positive experience for voters. The system proved that it works, and the voters were happy. About 96% of voters who were polled after voting with the technology-enabled model thought the process was easy with the new technology, and 91% were supportive of the technology being used in future elections.

The e-poll book process only works if connected to the Internet, but if the Internet connection is lost, people will still be able—

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Paul Miller): Sorry to interrupt. It's tradition to introduce a former member. Gerry Phillips, the former member for Scarborough—Agincourt in the 34th, 35th, 36th, 37th, 38th and 39th Parliaments, is sitting in the east gallery. Welcome.

Continue.

1010

Hon. Reza Moridi: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I also welcome the former MPP and the former cabinet minister—

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Paul Miller): Excuse me. Point of order: the member from Algoma—Manitoulin.

Mr. Michael Mantha: Do we have a quorum?

Mr. Percy Hatfield: Even with Mr. Phillips, we don't.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Paul Miller): I believe we don't. A quorum is necessary.

The Clerk-at-the-Table (Ms. Tonia Grannum): A quorum is not present.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Paul Miller): Thank you. Ring the bells.

The Acting Speaker ordered the bells rung.

The Clerk-at-the-Table (Ms. Tonia Grannum): A quorum is now present.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Paul Miller): A quorum is now present.

Continue.

Hon. Reza Moridi: As I was saying, I was welcoming former minister and former MPP Gerry Phillips to the Legislature.

Voting will still be done with paper ballots, so votes can still be counted by hand in the event of any issues which may occur. Vote tabulators will be connected to a secure network for a short period of time after the polls close for the purpose of transmitting data and results to the Chief Electoral Officer. Elections Ontario will work with Internet service providers to facilitate the use of secure connections for vote tabulators.

Elections Ontario tested the use of automated vote tabulators in the 2016 Whitby-Oshawa by-election and, as I indicated earlier, this was very successful and the voters were quite happy with the system. The Chief Electoral Officer documented the success and reflected on the learning of that experience in his extensive post-event report, saying that the machines worked flawlessly and that votes were counted faster than they had been in the previous election. That is quite understandable. Neither situation would compromise election results.

Elections in other provinces: Elections Canada, Elections Alberta, Elections Quebec, Elections New Brunswick and Elections Nova Scotia all permit the use of technology to support the voting process in some way. We are far behind in this in comparison to other provinces. If this bill passes, Elections Ontario will have the choice and the chance to employ modern technology in the elections process in this province.

This bill protects voter privacy by requiring that political parties submit a privacy policy to the Chief Electoral Officer before they are given access to voter lists. The Chief Electoral Officer would also have the authority to redact voter information from these lists in situations where a privacy concern has been raised.

In addition, when providing voter information to parties and their candidates, the Chief Electoral Officer and the returning officer would only be allowed to share the voter's name, unique identifier and address. The legislative changes require the CEO not to share personal information about electors in the case that a privacy policy is deemed inadequate. This is an appropriate safeguard to protect people's personal information.

An enormous amount of voter engagement takes place through the political process, as we know, and potential voters should be able to have the opportunity to speak with their candidates during election time when canvassing happens at their doors. If a canvasser is prevented from entering a multiple-residence building during the designated times, they can give notice that access must be granted within 24 hours, or immediately on polling

day. This notice can either be handed to the person who has denied the access or posted wherever access was prevented. If access is still not granted, the canvasser can formally notify the returning officer of this situation. The returning officer can then impose an administrative penalty on the owner of the multiple-resident building where access was denied. In the case of a condominium, the penalty would apply to the condominium corporation.

We want to make sure that people in Ontario, those who are living in condominiums and apartment buildings, participate in the democratic process in our province of Ontario, and hearing from candidates and their campaigners is a very important part of this democratic process. We all know that when we knock on doors and talk to people—potential voters—so many issues come to the surface. As well, the candidates propose and present their own plans and proposals to the voters and the voters ask questions. It's a major component of our democratic process and we have to make sure that our voters can communicate with their candidates in a free and democratic process.

Mr. Speaker, this bill is going to streamline our election process in the future and will provide Elections Ontario with the modern technology which they need to conduct our elections in the future.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Paul Miller): Thank you to the Minister of Research, Innovation and Science.

Second reading debate deemed adjourned.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Paul Miller): This House now stands recessed until 10:30 this morning.

The House recessed from 1017 to 1030.

INTRODUCTION OF VISITORS

Ms. Lisa MacLeod: It's a big day in Nepean-Carleton, because today Dylan Manary is our page captain. I'm joined by his father, Troy Manary of Greeley, in my constituency of Nepean-Carleton. Also, on behalf of my colleague Lisa Thompson, I want to introduce two wonderful people from the Huron-Bruce constituency, his grandparents Wilma and Don Manary. Welcome to Queen's Park today.

Mr. Percy Hatfield: I'd like to welcome back to Queen's Park Nancy and Allan Lawton, the grandparents of my page from Windsor-Tecumseh, Elisabeth Lawton. Welcome back,

Hon. Helena Jaczek: Please help me welcome a number of individuals from OASIS, whose member agencies help so many vulnerable people in Ontario. We have Ann Kenney, president; Michelle Marshall, VP; David Barber, past president; and Darren Connolly, also a vice-president at OASIS. They'll be hosting a reception later on today in room 230.

Mr. Patrick Brown: I'm honoured to welcome today in the House Brian Weaver, president, Ontario Command of the Royal Canadian Legion, and his delegation; Commander Robert Johnston and the sailors of the Royal Canadian Navy; Major Frank Lamie and the Queen's

Own Rifles—I actually went to high school with Frank; and retired Brigadier-General Julian Chapman of Wounded Warriors.

We also have here today representatives from the following organizations: the Canadian Forces staff college, HMCS York, Commissionaires Great Lakes, the Royal Canadian Military Institute, Invictus Games, the Naval Club of Toronto and the Toronto Branch of the Naval Association of Canada.

Welcome to Queen's Park.

Ms. Cheri DiNovo: I want to add my voice to the leader of the official opposition, on behalf of Andrea Horwath and all in the NDP. I particularly want to welcome Mary Keates, president of Legion 344; and James Cohen, a veteran of the Korean War, again of Legion 344.

But to all the legionnaires who are here, we give you a great welcome. Thank you for your service.

Hon. Tracy MacCharles: It gives me great pleasure to welcome Stephanie Hintermeister, a grade 9 student from the Scarborough part of my riding and daughter of a close friend of mine, Cathy Vanderkolf, who will be joining us later. Stephanie is here as part of take your grade 9 to work day. She is shadowing me throughout the day to learn all about this place and what MPPs and ministers do. Welcome, Stephanie.

Mr. Ernie Hardeman: I'm pleased to welcome Owen Stinson and Thomas Mount today for Take Our Kids to Work Day. Owen is the nephew of my executive assistant, Tara Barry, and we're happy to have these two joining us today to learn about the Ontario Legislature. Welcome, Owen and Thomas.

Miss Monique Taylor: It gives me great pleasure to welcome a grade 9 student who is here with me today. Clara McIntosh is the daughter of Bruce and Laura McIntosh. Welcome, Clara McIntosh, to the Legislature.

Ms. Soo Wong: It gives me great pleasure to welcome—

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Ahem.

Ms. Soo Wong: I do need to recognize him; he's actually my mentor: the great former member and minister from Scarborough—Agincourt, the Honourable Gerry Phillips, and his granddaughter Chloe.

I also want to welcome Commissionaires representatives and the chair of the board of governors, who are here at Queen's Park.

My last guest who is visiting here today is a former page and also a grade 9 student in the IB program at Monarch Park Collegiate, Angelica Voutsinas, who is here for Take Our Kids to Work Day. Welcome to Queen's Park.

Mr. Steve Clark: Thank you, Speaker. I want to introduce, through you, to the members of the Legislative Assembly a grade 9 student at Humberside Collegiate who will be assisting in my office today. Please welcome Kaja Tomé. Welcome to Queen's Park.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): My intention is to get through all of the introductions, so if you could be

brief, just make sure that you mention who they are, and we'll get through every one.

M^{me} France Gélinas: I would like to welcome Stewart Kiff and his daughter Elizabeth for the take your children to work day. Welcome to Queen's Park.

As well, I have a big delegation of long-term-care workers represented by CUPE. Their leader Fred Hahn and Candace Rennick are here, as well as long-term-care workers Cathy Webdale, Joanne Waddell, Luanne Roy, Debbie Pietracupa, Kevin Bates, Jessica Williams, Betty Lou Morgan, Kirsten Eade, Amanda Farrow, Nicole Panama, Karen Popadynetz, Mary Willis, Brenda Laronde, Pauline Lynde and Karen Jacobs. Welcome to Queen's Park.

Mrs. Amrit Mangat: I would like to welcome to Queen's Park the grade 9 students from St. Marcellinus Secondary School from my great riding of Mississauga—Brampton South. They are up there in the west gallery. Among them is Maya Katchutas, whose father works at Queen's Park. They are my constituents. Welcome to Queen's Park and enjoy the trip.

Mr. Monte McNaughton: It gives me great honour to introduce, on behalf of our leader, Patrick Brown, and the PC caucus, two former members of Parliament: Ted Opitz and Cornelius Chisu. Mr. Opitz represented Etobicoke Centre. Mr. Chisu represented Pickering—Scarborough East. Welcome to Queen's Park.

Mrs. Lisa Gretzky: It is my pleasure to welcome Patrick Hannon. He is a CUPE member from Windsor.

Hon. Yasir Naqvi: On behalf of the Premier and the government of Ontario, I also want to welcome the veterans who are with us here today at Queen's Park: members of the Legion and our current serving members of the Canadian Forces. We thank them for their sacrifice in the past and present as we mark Remembrance Week. Lest we forget.

Ms. Lisa M. Thompson: On behalf of the PC Party of Ontario, I too would like to welcome the members of CUPE.

Interjections.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): There's a lot of love today.

The member from Huron—Bruce, you can get yours in.

Ms. Lisa M. Thompson: Thank you very much, Speaker. On behalf of the PC Party of Ontario, we too would like to welcome the members of CUPE and we look forward to meeting with them.

Hon. Mitzie Hunter: I would like to acknowledge that today is Take Our Kids to Work Day and welcome all the students who are visiting here today.

Mr. Bill Walker: I would like to welcome Stewart Kiff and his daughter Elizabeth in the members' gallery.

Hon. Michael Coteau: I'd like to welcome my friend, Gwyn Chapman, who works for the city of Toronto but also the Canadian Black Caucus. Welcome to the Legislature.

Mr. Robert Bailey: I'd like to welcome to the Legislature today, through TV, Mr. Mitchell Burnard, for take

our children to work. He's in my constituency office back in Sarnia, a grade 9 student at LCCVI in Petrolia.

Hon. Reza Moridi: Please join me in welcoming my new colleague, Mr. Dan Ouimet, chief of staff at the Ministry of Research and Innovation, joining us today on his first day at Queen's Park.

Ms. Laurie Scott: I'd like to welcome Juanita Kemp, the assistant executive director for Legion, Ontario Command, from the great riding of Haliburton-Kawartha Lakes-Brock. Welcome to Queen's Park.

Hon. Kevin Daniel Flynn: I'd like to welcome to Queen's Park the leaders of CUPE who are here today: Fred Hahn, Candace Rennick, Chris Watson and all those members of CUPE who are here to participate in lobby day.

Mr. Granville Anderson: I would like to welcome two grade 9 students here today: Isabella Smith and Rahim Khan. I would also like to welcome Verona Pernell to Queen's Park.

Hon. Charles Sousa: I have great pleasure introducing our senior intern in the Ministry of Finance, Mr. Gerry Phillips, who was a long-time member of this House, and his granddaughter Chloe, who is just wonderful; and, as mentioned and yet to come, the son of Gadi Mayman, the present CEO of the Ontario Financing Authority—his son Aaron will be here. And Jan De Silva, the president of the Toronto Board of Trade: Her son Jake Therrien will be here as well.

1040

Mrs. Cristina Martins: As was already mentioned here today, it's take your grade 9 to work day. It gives me great pleasure to welcome my nephew Phillip here today, along with his friends Michael and Jacob. Welcome to Queen's Park.

Hon. Yasir Naqvi: On behalf of the member from Vaughan, I want to welcome the family of page captain Nicolas Polga: parents, Miriam and Franco Polga, and grandparents Miriam and José Polga. Welcome to Queen's Park.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Further introductions?

I have an introduction which is very traditional that the Speaker gives, so I'll have a chit-chat with the Deputy Speaker and the Minister of Finance in a moment. I would like to introduce the former member from Scarborough-Agincourt in the 34th, 35th, 36th, 37th, 38th and 39th Parliaments: in the east gallery, former member Mr. Gerry Phillips.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): I recognize the member from Simcoe-Grey on a point of order.

Mr. Jim Wilson: I'm seeking unanimous consent that the orders for second and third reading of Bill 55, An Act to proclaim Remembrance Week and to provide for the observance of Remembrance Day, be immediately called and that the Speaker put the question on second and third reading without debate or amendment.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Mr. Wilson is seeking unanimous consent to put forward the orders for second and third reading of Bill 55, An Act to proclaim

Remembrance Week and to provide for the observance of Remembrance Day, that they be immediately called and that the Speaker put the question on second and third reading without debate or amendment.

Do we agree? Agreed.

REMEMBRANCE WEEK ACT, 2016

LOI DE 2016 SUR LA SEMAINE DU SOUVENIR

Mr. Wilson moved second reading of the following bill:

Bill 55, An Act to proclaim Remembrance Week and to provide for the observance of Remembrance Day / Projet de loi 55, Loi proclamant la semaine du Souvenir et prévoyant l'observation du jour du Souvenir.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Do we agree? Carried.

Second reading agreed to.

REMEMBRANCE WEEK ACT, 2016

LOI DE 2016 SUR LA SEMAINE DU SOUVENIR

Mr. Wilson moved third reading of the following bill:

Bill 55, An Act to proclaim Remembrance Week and to provide for the observance of Remembrance Day / Projet de loi 55, Loi proclamant la semaine du Souvenir et prévoyant l'observation du jour du Souvenir.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Do we agree? Carried.

Be it resolved that the bill do now pass and be entitled as in the motion.

Third reading agreed to.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Introductions being completed, it is therefore now time for question period.

ORAL QUESTIONS

BY-ELECTION IN SUDBURY

Mr. Patrick Brown: To the Premier: I couldn't get an answer yesterday, so I'm going to try again today.

The tapes are clear, and now the Premier's deputy chief of staff has been charged with bribery by the OPP. The people of Ontario want to hear from the Premier: Who ordered the Premier's deputy chief of staff and top fundraiser to allegedly bribe Andrew Olivier with a job in exchange for a withdrawal from seeking the candidacy in the Sudbury by-election?

Hon. Kathleen O. Wynne: I've been very open with the Legislature, with the media and with the public about the allegations surrounding the Sudbury by-election. Now that charges have been laid, the matter is before the court. It's before the court under a presumption of innocence. We'll continue to co-operate with the authorities,

with any independent investigation, and Pat Sorbara has stepped down from her role.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Supplementary? The member from Leeds–Grenville.

Mr. Steve Clark: Back to the Premier: The tapes are clear, and now the Premier's deputy chief of staff has been charged with bribery by the OPP. The people of Ontario want to hear from the Premier: Who ordered the Premier's deputy chief of staff and top fundraiser to allegedly bribe Andrew Olivier with a job in exchange for his withdrawal from seeking the candidacy in the Sudbury by-election?

Interjections.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Stop the clock. I'm not amused with some of the things I've been hearing, and I'll stop it. So provide yourself with your own discipline and stop now, before I do.

Premier.

Hon. Kathleen O. Wynne: Attorney General.

Hon. Yasir Naqvi: I think, as the Premier said earlier, she has been very open to the public, to this Legislature and to the media as it relates to the allegations surrounding the Sudbury by-election. As we know, this matter is now before the courts, and it would be highly inappropriate for any member of this House to engage in any speculation or questioning that would undermine the court proceedings. We should respect that, and let the matter be dealt with within the courts.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Final supplementary? The member from Wellington–Halton Hills.

Mr. Ted Arnott: Mr. Speaker, back to the Premier: The tapes are clear and now the Premier's deputy chief of staff has been charged with bribery by the OPP. The people of Ontario want to hear from the Premier: Who ordered the Premier's deputy chief of staff and top fundraiser to allegedly bribe Andrew Olivier with a job in exchange for his withdrawal from seeking the candidacy in the Sudbury by-election?

Hon. Yasir Naqvi: It's unfortunate that the opposition continues to ask questions that should really be dealt with within the realm of the court of law. Speaker, as you are well aware, we have a rule around sub judice within our standing orders that gives us sufficient guidance in terms of matters that may be before courts, that they may not be discussed or dealt with in this House.

I also want to confirm that this matter will be handled by the Public Prosecution Service of Canada, which is independent and separate from the Ministry of the Attorney General.

BY-ELECTION IN SUDBURY

Mr. Ernie Hardeman: My question is to the Premier. The tapes are clear and now the Premier's deputy chief of staff has been charged with bribery by the OPP. The people of Ontario want to hear from the Premier. For the fourth time, who ordered the Premier's deputy chief of staff and the top fundraiser to allegedly bribe Andrew Olivier with a job in exchange for his withdrawal from seeking the candidacy in the Sudbury by-election?

Hon. Kathleen O. Wynne: Attorney General.

Hon. Yasir Naqvi: Again I say to the honourable member that the Premier has been very open to the public and to the Legislature and to the media on the facts and circumstances relating to the allegations in the Sudbury by-election. Now that there are charges laid, this matter falls squarely within the scope of the courts. It is highly inappropriate for these questions to be posed or anybody trying to answer any of these questions.

These are serious matters that will be dealt with within the court of law. On this side of the House, from the government perspective, we respect that independent impartial process and we urge that all members of the House do the same.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Supplementary question. The member from Nepean–Carleton.

Ms. Lisa MacLeod: Speaker, my question goes back to the Premier. The tapes are crystal clear and now the Premier's deputy chief of staff has been charged with bribery by the OPP. The people of Ottawa want to hear from the Premier. For the fifth time, who ordered the Premier's deputy chief of staff and top fundraiser to allegedly bribe Andrew Olivier with a job in exchange for his withdrawal from seeking the candidacy in the Sudbury by-election?

Hon. Yasir Naqvi: Mr. Speaker, the opposition can continue to ask the same question again and again, as much as they wish to do. We on this side of the House are not going to interfere in a court process. These are serious allegations, charges that have been laid against individuals. We must respect the process, and the neutrality and the independence of the process, and let a court determine, based on evidence, the outcome—not in this House.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Final supplementary. The member from Simcoe–Grey.

1050

Mr. Jim Wilson: Mr. Speaker, to the Premier: The tapes are clear and now the Premier's deputy chief of staff has been charged with bribery by the OPP. The people of Ontario want to hear from the Premier. For the sixth time, who ordered the Premier's deputy chief of staff and top fundraiser—

Interjection.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Member from Barrie, come to order.

Please continue.

Mr. Jim Wilson: —to allegedly bribe Andrew Olivier with a job in exchange for his withdrawal from seeking the candidacy in the Sudbury by-election?

Hon. Yasir Naqvi: For the sixth time, this matter is before the court of law. The members from all sides of the House, I believe, respect our courts and the impartiality and the neutrality of our court system. This matter, resulting in serious charges and allegations, is not to be prosecuted in the Legislature. It has to be dealt with within the court of law.

Speaker, it is our shared responsibility, as outlined in our own standing orders, that we do not interfere in that

process. So I urge the members from all sides, again, not to engage in any speculation or cross-examination and to let the courts do their job.

BY-ELECTION IN SUDBURY

Mr. Jagmeet Singh: My question is for the Premier. The Premier's top aide, Pat Sorbara, and her Sudbury power broker, Gerry Lougheed, are now facing charges, as we all know, under the Election Act. These charges stem from the alleged bribery of the Liberal candidate, Andrew Olivier, in last year's by-election.

Yesterday, the Premier failed once again to answer the main question that hangs over this entire scenario: Did the Premier direct either Ms. Sorbara or Mr. Lougheed to offer an alleged bribe to Mr. Olivier?

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Stop the clock. I'm going to remind the member, as I did yesterday, that there are ways in which questions can be put without impugning somebody else in terms of a crime. I am going to remind him that if it gets that close again, I'll ask him to withdraw.

Premier.

Hon. Kathleen O. Wynne: Again, I have been very open in this Legislature, I have been open in the media and I have been open with the public. If the member opposite refers to past transcripts, to the past Hansard, he will see that there were many, many questions answered on this issue, and I talked about the process around the Sudbury by-election.

Right now, Mr. Speaker, we are dealing with a situation where the matter is before the courts. Under the presumption of innocence, we need to let that process roll out. We'll continue to co-operate with an independent investigation. Pat Sorbara has stepped down from her roles.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Supplementary?

Mr. Jagmeet Singh: When Pat Sorbara, the Premier's deputy chief of staff, called Mr. Olivier, she said she made it clear what the Premier had in mind. She said the Premier wanted to ensure that Mr. Olivier had "a role," and she said, "If there were other things that you're particularly interested in that is within her realm to make you part of, then she is more than prepared to do that."

Did the Premier ask Pat Sorbara to make that phone call—

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): The member will withdraw. If he continues in the same vein, I'll pass the question. Withdraw.

Mr. Jagmeet Singh: Withdraw.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Thank you. You may reword the question.

Mr. Jagmeet Singh: Did the Premier ask Ms. Sorbara to make that phone call and did she direct Ms. Sorbara to offer the alleged bribe?

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): You just asked the same question I asked you to withdraw. It's not going to happen. I'm passing the question. The Premier has an option to respond. Thank you.

Hon. David Zimmer: You're a lawyer. You know better.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): The Minister of Indigenous Relations, second time.

New question.

BY-ELECTION IN SUDBURY

Mr. Jagmeet Singh: When Gerry Lougheed, the Premier's Sudbury power broker, met with Mr. Olivier, he made it clear who he was working for. He said he had come "on behalf of the Premier." He said there could be a "reward" for quitting the race, and he said, "The Premier wants to talk to you. We would like to present to you options in terms of appointments, jobs, whatever."

Did the Premier ask Mr. Lougheed to make this phone call or make this visit, and did she direct him to make this offer?

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Stop the clock. I've taken the time to make sure that there is an understanding of why I'm not happy with the way in which the question is put, and I'll explain it. I have to insist that members use parliamentary language when asking and answering questions. I accept that this is highly important, and I'm allowing the questions, which I should. But this perceived level of importance does not somehow exempt matters from normal rules of debate. It's not acceptable to make allegations against another member, even if it is done with a clever inference or an insinuation. The listener knows—I know—what is being implied. As it is said, you cannot indirectly do what you cannot do directly.

The standing orders—the rules of debate—in section 23(h), on page 20, indicate clearly that you cannot make that charge. Hard-hitting questions are absolutely allowed, and answers are allowed. I know that the members are skillful enough to be able to reword their questions to avoid such a breach of the standing orders.

The member has done it again. Please avoid impugning somebody in the House for committing a crime. You will have one more attempt.

Mr. Jagmeet Singh: I completed my question, Mr. Speaker.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Premier?

Hon. Kathleen O. Wynne: Attorney General.

Hon. Yasir Naqvi: Thank you very much, Speaker. First of all, thank you for your clarification in this very important matter. I also find it surprising, given that the member opposite who posed the question is a defence counsel and I know firmly believes in the presumption of innocence—that he would pursue this line of questioning.

I think he is also very well aware, as a trial lawyer, of the importance of courts of law, the kind of evidentiary burden that is involved in a court of law, and the neutrality, impartiality and fairness of our judiciary in making those determinations based on evidence. I'm sure he recognizes, as does everybody else in this House, that this matter is before the courts. We should respect their jurisdiction and leave that matter in their hands.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Supplementary.

Mr. Jagmeet Singh: Again to the Premier: Since the Premier doesn't want to tell us about the conversations that she had with Ms. Sorbara and that she may or may not have had with Mr. Lougheed, and what they had to do with Mr. Olivier, I'm going to ask a different line of questioning.

In the sworn information filed yesterday, the OPP said that sometime between November 19, 2014, and February 6, 2014, Ms. Sorbara did "directly or indirectly give, procure or promise or agree to procure an office of employment to induce a person, to wit, Glenn Thibeault, to become a candidate contrary to section 96.1(e) of the Election Act."

What did the Premier authorize, if anything, for Pat Sorbara to offer Mr. Glenn Thibeault to become the Liberal Party's candidate?

Hon. Yasir Naqvi: I think the member opposite knows quite well that this is not the place to cross-examine on a sworn affidavit. The appropriate place for that is a court of law, in front of a judge. Speaker, to reaffirm what you've said and what I've said before, it's our shared responsibility that this matter, which deals with some very serious allegations, be dealt with in a court of law. We owe that to Ontarians. We owe that to the people accused, who are presumed to be innocent in this matter until a determination by a judge.

Therefore, Speaker, again I urge the member opposite who posed the question, and all members, to respect our judiciary. Let's focus on issues that are important to Ontarians.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Final supplementary.

Mr. Jagmeet Singh: This is part two, I believe, Mr. Speaker.

The OPP alleges that Mr. Lougheed and Ms. Sorbara "committed the offence knowingly, and are thereby guilty of a corrupt practice." Now, for the first time, we've learned that one of those charges relates to the now-Minister of Energy, Mr. Thibeault, and his Liberal Party candidacy.

Will the Premier tell us right now what were the 30 pieces of silver that she and Pat Sorbara offered to Mr. Thibeault to get—

Interjections.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Order. The member will withdraw.

Mr. Jagmeet Singh: Withdraw.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Pass.
New question.

1100

BY-ELECTION IN SUDBURY

Mr. Patrick Brown: My question is for the Premier. In sworn information, the OPP says that between November 19, 2014, and February 6, 2015, Pat Sorbara did, "directly or indirectly give, procure or promise or agree to procure an office of employment to induce a

person, to wit, Glenn Thibeault, to become a candidate contrary to section 96.1(e) of the Election Act."

Mr. Speaker, this is shocking. My question for the Premier is, did the Premier's deputy chief of staff offer the current Minister of Energy an office in order to induce him to become a candidate? We deserve an answer.

Interjections.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Be seated, please. Thank you.

Mr. James J. Bradley: That was Laurie Scott you were talking about.

Ms. Lisa MacLeod: Take that outside, Jim.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Excuse me. I was quite prepared to deal with what I heard, and someone else has got herself into the mix. The chief government whip will come to order, and now the member from Nepean–Carleton will come to order.

Premier?

Hon. Kathleen O. Wynne: Attorney General.

Hon. Yasir Naqvi: Again, the same question has been asked, despite what you asked us to consider, Speaker. Again, my response remains the same because as the Attorney General I will—and the government will—remain very respectful of the jurisdiction of our courts. This matter has now, since the charges have been laid, proceeded to the courts, and it should be dealt with at that level.

I would reaffirm again that this matter will be handled by the Public Prosecution Service of Canada, and we'll leave it up to those prosecutors to make the case based on whatever evidence they have available to them, and up to a judge to make a determination.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Supplementary, the member from Leeds–Grenville.

Mr. Steve Clark: Back to the Premier: Quite frankly, people want to hear from the Premier. They don't want to hear from the Attorney General on this.

In the sworn information, the OPP said that between November 19, 2014, and February 6, 2015, Sorbara did, "directly or indirectly give, procure or promise or agree to procure an office of employment to induce a person, to wit, Glenn Thibeault, to become a candidate contrary to section 96.1(e) of the Election Act."

Did the Premier's deputy chief of staff offer the Minister of Energy an office in order to induce him to become a candidate?

Hon. Yasir Naqvi: Once again, the Premier has been very open with Ontarians. She has answered the questions of the media and she has answered questions surrounding these allegations right here in this House.

However, the Premier is also very mindful of her responsibility in terms of the process, in terms of the presumption of innocence, in terms of allegations being just allegations. The matter is before the courts. That is the most appropriate venue for it to be determined, with all the weight around rules of evidence and other procedures. We respect that and we look forward to having this matter dealt with within the courts.

BY-ELECTION IN SUDBURY

M^{me} France Gélinas: Ma question est pour la première ministre. The Premier appointed Mr. Gerry Lougheed to the Greater Sudbury Police Services Board in 2011, and then again in 2014. Yesterday, Mr. Lougheed was charged with bribery under the Ontario Election Act. When will the Premier rescind Mr. Lougheed's appointment to the Greater Sudbury Police Services Board?

Hon. Kathleen O. Wynne: Attorney General.

Hon. Yasir Naqvi: The opposition can keep asking the same questions again and again. The answer does not—

Interjections.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Thank you.

Answer, please.

Hon. Yasir Naqvi: The answer remains the same. These are allegations as they relate to a court matter. It is only appropriate that it be dealt with within the courts.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Supplementary?

M^{me} France Gélinas: Yesterday Mrs. Sorbara was charged with bribery under the Ontario Election Act. Yesterday, Mr. Lougheed was charged with bribery under Ontario's Election Act. Yesterday, the Premier asked Mrs. Sorbara to step aside.

Yesterday, the Premier did not ask Mr. Lougheed to step aside. For the people of Sudbury, it seems like a double standard. When will the Premier rescind Mr. Lougheed's appointment to the Greater Sudbury Police Services Board?

Hon. Yasir Naqvi: It's my understanding, Speaker, that when it comes to appointments of the police services board, that's a decision of the board itself, not of the Premier or the government. There is a process under the Police Services Act that is provided to deal with matters like this. It would be highly inappropriate for us to speculate as to how the process is—but I can assure you, Speaker, the Premier does not have the power or the capacity within the legislation to remove somebody from a police services board.

SENIORS

Ms. Sophie Kiwala: My question is for the minister responsible for seniors affairs. Minister, I want to begin by thanking you for visiting my riding of Kingston and the Islands to visit with seniors. On Saturday, we had excellent coverage of your visit with OASIS, a non-profit seniors' supportive living centre.

I was also very pleased that you visited the Kingston Seniors Association for their annual general meeting. It was great to see that you are making time to travel and meet with seniors right across Ontario. I'm sure that this is providing you with great insight into the unique challenges and opportunities faced by our communities across the province. Your efforts will undoubtedly give you a fresh perspective on what senior living means. I know there's no replacement for that first-hand experience.

Mr. Speaker, can the minister responsible for seniors affairs inform the House about her experience meeting with seniors in Kingston and the Islands?

Hon. Dipika Damerla: I want to begin by thanking the honourable member for her important question. I just want to thank her, Mr. Speaker, for all of her advocacy on behalf of seniors in her riding. It was amply clear that the good people of Kingston are very appreciative of the member's work, especially on behalf of the seniors.

As the member mentioned, I did in fact have the privilege of visiting seniors in Kingston, as well as in Ottawa, just last week. In Kingston I met with two groups who provided key insight into the challenges seniors are facing in Ontario. Mr. Speaker, not only did I get an insight into the challenges facing seniors in Ontario, but more importantly, I also got insight into how communities are coming together and taking the initiative to address these challenges. My meeting with OASIS, for example, was truly inspirational, where I had lunch with seniors who were so proud to be living independently.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Supplementary?

Ms. Sophie Kiwala: I want to thank the minister for her answer and for her commitment to improving the lives of seniors in Ontario. I'm very pleased to hear that you're so greatly inspired by the efforts these groups are making. I've been working with these groups as well, and I share your enthusiasm about their commitment and their energy. I agree that it is important to foster a sense of community and support between seniors' groups.

As you mentioned, you did not just stop in Kingston, but travelled to Ottawa as well. I understand that during your visit, you met with leaders of many of Ottawa's Elderly Person Centres and with students from the retirement home management program at Algonquin College. Mr. Speaker, could the minister update this House about her meetings with these different groups in Ottawa?

Hon. Dipika Damerla: Again, I want to thank the member from Kingston and the Islands for this question. Indeed, I did go to Ottawa, as well, where at the Good Companions seniors centre I met with a number of representatives from the Elderly Persons Centre leaders in the area. At the Good Companions seniors centre, I was very impressed by this one facility, a groundbreaking program for seniors that is called Seniors' Centre Without Walls, where a telephone program is used to offer recreational, educational and health-based phone seminars for individuals unable to physically access community centres. This is a great example of using a low-cost, innovative way through the telephone of addressing social isolation. I came away very impressed with this program.

I also visited Algonquin College's ambitious adult day program for seniors with dementia.

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BY-ELECTION IN SUDBURY

Ms. Sylvia Jones: To the Premier: The Premier's deputy chief of staff has been charged with bribery by the

OPP. The people of Ontario want to hear from the Premier: Did the Premier's deputy chief of staff offer the Minister of Energy an office in order to induce him to become a candidate?

Hon. Kathleen O. Wynne: Attorney General.

Hon. Yasir Naqvi: The Premier has spoken about this issue. She has answered questions in the media. She has answered questions in this House.

Now that there are charges laid, it's highly inappropriate for anybody to engage in a conversation. That's not appropriate, Speaker. The matter is before the courts, and it is our shared responsibility that we respect that and let it be dealt with in a court of law.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Supplementary? The member from Nipissing.

Mr. Victor Fedeli: Mr. Speaker, I would like to direct this to the Premier, please.

The Premier's deputy chief of staff has been charged with bribery by the OPP. The people of Ontario want to hear from the Premier: Did the Premier's deputy chief of staff offer the Minister of Energy an office in order to induce him to become a candidate?

Hon. Yasir Naqvi: The Premier has addressed this question today here in the House, and she has done so with the media. The Premier has been absolutely transparent.

But the Premier also respects the court process. This is not the time or the place to engage in any kind of cross-examination. That place is in the court, and we should respect that. I urge again all members to follow the rules that have been outlined in the standing orders, as you indicated earlier, Speaker, where we respect legal proceedings, and not prejudice those proceedings whatsoever.

LONG-TERM CARE

Mr. Wayne Gates: My question is to the Premier.

Yesterday, I was back in Niagara to meet with Helen. Helen has been put in a terrible position by this government. You see, her parents have been married for 70 years and were never apart before they needed long-term care in August. Helen's father, Clarence, is a resident of Shalom Manor in Grimsby, but her mom, Jessie, is at a home in St. Catharines.

Clarence and Jessie have never been separated. In their final years, after spending a lifetime together, and under a completely inadequate couple reunification program, chances are they may never live together again.

My question is simple: What will the Premier do today to help Helen reunite her parents and make sure they don't spend another day apart?

Hon. Kathleen O. Wynne: I know that the Minister of Health and Long-Term Care is going to want to speak to this. But I just want to say personally to the member opposite that this is an issue that is extremely important to me personally and, I think, to all of us in this House. We all know couples, whether they are our parents or whether they are our grandparents or whether they are

our aunts and uncles—we know people who have been together for 50, 60 years, who need to be together in those years. It's like they have become one unit. So we are doing everything we can to make sure that that is the standard, that that is what happens in every situation.

As I say, I know that the Minister of Health and Long-Term Care will want to speak to the specifics.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Supplementary.

Mr. Wayne Gates: I know that no one in this House today, including the health minister, would ever want their parents to be separated, in two different long-term facilities in different cities, after a lifetime together. It is wrong for couples to be separated after spending 70 years together just because they need long-term care.

Jessie is 92 and Clarence is 93 years old. They miss each other terribly. They need to be together. They are worried about each other and should not be divorced by a long-term-care system.

Will the Premier commit today to reunify Jessie and Clarence and give them the dignity and the respect of living together for their final years?

Hon. Kathleen O. Wynne: Minister of Health and Long-Term Care.

Hon. Eric Hoskins: This is an extremely important issue. We're talking about people's homes and we're talking about two individuals who should reside in the same home. They shouldn't be separated. In fact, in our long-term-care system, the highest priority we have for finding a bed, for transferring to a different bed, is spousal reunification. There is no other priority that we attach a higher priority to. In fact, we introduced regulations in our Long-Term Care Homes Act to enable residents in different homes to be reunified. It should never happen in the first place.

This is the first I'm hearing of this. I only wish that the member had actually approached me on this. I can't speak to the specific issue, but rather than raise it in this forum, I believe it's an issue that we could have resolved together, Mr. Speaker.

ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT

Ms. Daiene Vernile: My question is for the Minister of Economic Development and Growth. We see Ontario's information, communications and technology sector growing rapidly and driving innovation in our economy. When you visit my riding of Kitchener Centre, you certainly see evidence of that.

Waterloo region is where the smart phone—the BlackBerry—was invented. And it's where young entrepreneurs continue to innovate in software and hardware creation, and in future technology that will no doubt change the way that we live. This dynamic entrepreneurial environment, in conjunction with the GTA, has been labelled the "Toronto-Waterloo technology region corridor," with companies such as Google, Shopify, Thalmic Labs and Research in Motion leading the way, and thousands—yes, thousands—of tech start-ups. These businesses are creating well-paying jobs.

Speaker, the minister was recently in California pitching Ontario. Could he please tell us about the prospects that came out of that trip?

Hon. Brad Duguid: I want to thank the member for Kitchener Centre for that question, but more so for being such a huge champion of innovation in the ICT sector in her community of Kitchener-Waterloo.

As I try to respond to that question, Mr. Speaker, I think about how important it is for us to accomplish our role of passing on a good economy, a thriving economy, to the next generation. When I look at the fact that Ontario is now second in North America in ICT to California, and I look at Chloe, Gerry Phillips's granddaughter over here, as Gerry is preoccupied with one of my colleagues—

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): To the Chair, please.

Hon. Brad Duguid: I say that's what it's all about, Mr. Speaker: the young folks here in this audience. It's building that next-generation economy.

The fact that we're number two in North America and the fact that we're attracting investments from Slack, Square, Google, Cisco and Amazon—all those companies—bodes well for our economic future.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Supplementary?

Ms. Daiene Vernile: I'd like to thank the minister for his answer. It's very encouraging to hear that he's actively promoting our most innovative companies and expanding access to global markets.

When I sit down to hear from tech sector stakeholders in Kitchener Centre, especially those who have chosen to locate in our community, they always offer a very long list of very interesting reasons as to why they've chosen Waterloo region and Ontario to hang a shingle.

I can tell you that my own son started a high-tech company in Kitchener a few years ago. He has a subsidiary in southern California and a sales team in the Pacific Rim, but he chooses to keep home base for his company in Ontario for a number of reasons.

Speaker, could the minister please speak about that? Considering the intense competition on the global scene, what makes Ontario an outstanding place to do business, especially in the tech sector, and what else is this government doing to ensure growth in this sector?

Hon. Brad Duguid: The member from Kitchener Centre is bang on. We need to continue to help our local companies grow, as well. We need to help them scale up. They're doing extremely well and we're producing some of the best young, talented entrepreneurs anywhere in the world today. Our role now is to help them scale up so they can create huge multinational companies.

We need to maintain that global edge by ensuring we have the lowest effective corporate tax rates in North America. That helps. We need to ensure we have the most generous R&D tax credits in North America, which we have, which is attracting them. And we need to ensure that that huge flow of talent coming out of our post-secondary institutions, which is attracting investments to Ontario and helping these companies scale up, continues.

Mr. Speaker, we're going to continue to work with them on that through our business growth initiative. We're going to continue to drive this economy, and we're going to continue to help those young, successful entrepreneurs scale up to become globally competitive.

BY-ELECTION IN SUDBURY

Mr. Steve Clark: My question is to the Minister of Energy. In the sworn information, the OPP says that between November 19, 2014, and February 6, 2015, Sorbara did "directly or indirectly give, procure or promise or agree to procure an office of employment to induce a person, to wit, Glenn Thibeault, to become a candidate contrary to section 96.1(e) of the Election Act."

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My question, Minister: What were you offered to become a candidate?

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): There are two issues that I would share with you. First, within the ministry responsibilities, that's what's supposed to happen when question period is on for the government. The second issue is that—it's what I spoke of when I responded to someone earlier, in that it was a side way to do what I asked not to happen, which is to imply somebody was doing something improper.

If that's the case and I am going to rule on the ministry stuff, I'm going to ask the member to re-ask the question in a way that does not make an implied allegation. I'll let the member have an attempt to ask that question in a different way.

Mr. Steve Clark: My question: What were you promised to become the Minister of Energy?

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): I'm not going to permit that question because of the nature in which I explained already.

Interjections.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Excuse me. Stop the clock.

Interjections.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Order, please.

Interjections.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): The member from Oxford will come to order. The member from Nepean-Carleton will come to order. The member from Simcoe-Grey will come to order. The member from Dufferin-Caledon will come to order.

Interjections.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): The member from Dufferin-Caledon, second time.

The member from Leeds-Grenville.

Mr. Steve Clark: I want him to answer to the question.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): The member from Leeds-Grenville—

Interjections.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): You're not being helpful.

The member from Leeds-Grenville, come to order.

Mr. Steve Clark: I still want an answer.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): The member from Leeds-Grenville, second time.

Mr. Steve Clark: Speaker, I'm not going to withdraw. I want an answer.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): The member from Leeds-Grenville is warned.

Mr. Steve Clark: I want an answer.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): The member from Leeds-Grenville is warned.

Mr. Steve Clark: I want an answer.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Next question. The member from Nickel Belt.

Mr. Steve Clark: I want an answer.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): The member from Leeds-Grenville is named.

Mr. Clark was escorted from the chamber.

Interjection.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): The Minister of Finance will come to order.

Interjection.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): The Minister of Finance, second time.

Interjections.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Stop the clock.

Interjections.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): The Minister of Education will come to order. The Minister of Finance—I don't think he heard me—it's the second time.

Hon. Charles Sousa: My apologies.

Interjections.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): The member from Davenport, come to order.

New question. The member from Nickel Belt—sorry, the member from Bramalea—Gore—Malton.

BY-ELECTION IN SUDBURY

Mr. Jagmeet Singh: My question is for the Premier. The OPP alleges that Mr. Lougheed and Ms. Sorbara “committed the offence knowingly, and are thereby guilty of a corrupt practice.” Now, for the first time, we've learned that one of those charges relates to the offer that Ms. Sorbara made—whether or not it was made—to Mr. Thibeault, now the Minister of Energy, to become the Liberal Party's candidate.

Will the Premier tell us if she was aware of what was offered, what the discussions were, and who made those discussions to Mr. Thibeault to get him to run for the Liberal Party?

Hon. Kathleen O. Wynne: Attorney General.

Hon. Yasir Naqvi: Again, the member opposite is a defence counsel. He has been in the courts a lot, and I know that he knows the process. I know that he knows and understands the concept of presumption of innocence. I know that he knows the sub judice rules that are outlined in the standing orders. So I am a bit surprised that he continues, on behalf of his party and operatives,

to ask the same questions, when he knows that this is not the appropriate place to answer.

Once again, I respectfully ask the members opposite to recognize and respect our shared responsibility and let this matter be dealt with in the courts of law.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Supplementary?

Mr. Jagmeet Singh: There are certain things that are achieved in the court of justice, through the criminal justice system, which require proof beyond a reasonable doubt. There are certain questions that can be answered here in Parliament. I stand by that very proudly, and we need to get those questions answered here.

The members of Parliament in Ottawa made a salary of about \$167,000 last year. MPPs in this House make significantly less. But cabinet ministers here in Ontario make about \$166,000, which is virtually the same as what MPPs in Ottawa make.

Now, who ever discussed with Ms. Sorbara the bridging of the salary gap between Mr. Thibeault's MP salary and the MPP salary and whether or not appointing him to the cabinet was a part of that discussion?

Hon. Yasir Naqvi: Speaker, that is just an absolutely ridiculous question. I think that according to the member's math, the member from Sudbury took a \$60,000 or \$70,000 pay cut so that he could serve the people of his riding. That's what may have motivated the member from Sudbury to run, so he can continue to build schools and hospitals in his community, so he can serve his constituents in a manner that is relevant to their lives.

Again we find, and I find, these lines of questioning highly inappropriate because they impugn motives, as you have stated earlier. This matter is before the courts. Let us respect their jurisdiction.

NORTHERN ONTARIO FILM INDUSTRY

Ms. Ann Hoggarth: My question today is for the Minister of Northern Development and Mines. It is important for northerners to know that their government is making investments in the north that will encourage job creation and economic activity. More and more film and television productions are looking to northern Ontario. Well-known, critically acclaimed films such as *Sleeping Giant* and *Born to be Blue* were both produced in northern Ontario.

I understand that the film industry in northern Ontario is a significant source of jobs and plays an important role in the local economy. Mr. Speaker, can the minister please explain what this government is doing to support job creation in northern Ontario and to support northern Ontario's film industry?

Hon. Michael Gravelle: Thanks to the member for Barrie for that question. We are very proud that, through the Northern Ontario Heritage Fund Corp., we're really building a film industry in the north.

Just last month, I was joined by Jennifer Jonas, producer of the acclaimed film *Born to be Blue*, to host a screening of the film in my riding of Thunder Bay—Superior North. It was a great opportunity to celebrate

the dynamic films being funded through the Northern Ontario Heritage Fund Corp.

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Our government is working hard every single day to help strengthen and diversify the northern economy and create good-quality jobs for people in the north by supporting the rapidly growing film and television production sector in the north.

When film and television productions come to town in any community, local hotels, restaurants and businesses see increased activity. We are seeing film equipment studios being put together and film board studios being put together. Local residents are finding opportunities for spots as extras on the set or jobs as crew members. Through the Northern Ontario Heritage Fund Corp., our government is continuing to work hard to build great economic development momentum in northern Ontario.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Supplementary?

Ms. Ann Hoggarth: It is clear that this government is committed to supporting and growing the film and television industry in northern Ontario. This support is critical because for every \$1 million of film and television production, it ends up generating 21 full-time direct and associated jobs.

I understand that the minister recently made some announcements in northern Ontario on the investments that the government is making through the NOHFC for the television and film industry in the north. Speaker, through you to the minister, can the minister please explain how these investments have helped the television and film industry in the north and what this means for the people in northern Ontario?

Hon. Michael Gravelle: I thank the member for Barrie for the question. It really is a tremendous story. Last year, film and television production added \$1.5 billion to the provincial economy, securing Ontario as the number one film and television production centre in Canada and the third largest by volume in North America, behind only California and New York. In this past year alone, the Northern Ontario Heritage Fund Corp. has invested over \$13 million in 23 film projects produced across the north. That means that all kinds of communities are benefiting from it.

Because of the NOHFC's investments in the film industry, the north is now home to equipment rental companies, film studios, casting companies and post-production facilities. This is allowing for full-service production facilities right here in northern Ontario.

Investments in film and television production are part of our economic plan to build up northern Ontario, delivering on our number one priority: to grow the economy and to create jobs.

BY-ELECTION IN SUDBURY

Mr. Jagmeet Singh: My question is to the Premier. Is the Premier aware of what was discussed between Mr. Thibeault and Ms. Sorbara when it came to him running for the Liberal Party?

Hon. Kathleen O. Wynne: Attorney General.

Hon. Yasir Naqvi: This matter is before the courts. We respect the jurisdiction of the courts, and I urge all members to do the same.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Supplementary?

Mr. Jagmeet Singh: If there was any offer made, who made the offer and what did it consist of?

Hon. Yasir Naqvi: This matter is before the courts, and it would be highly inappropriate to answer any such questions in this House. We ask all members to respect the jurisdiction of the courts.

CONSUMER PROTECTION

Mrs. Cristina Martins: My question is for the Attorney General. Many Canadians were moved and inspired by the outstanding performance by Gord Downie and the Tragically Hip during their farewell tour this summer. However, many Hip fans, including many from my own riding of Davenport and really from all across Ontario, could not get tickets to see this iconic Canadian band perform for the last time. In a matter of seconds, shows across the province were sold out, with some tickets later appearing on the secondary market at an inflated price. This is wrong, and this left fans frustrated and disappointed. I also know that this happens with other concerts and sporting events. Fans just can't get tickets, no matter how hard they try.

I know that the Attorney General agrees that this is a problem and that our government needs to take action to help fans across Ontario have a fair shake at getting tickets to their favourite events. Can the Attorney General please tell this House about our government's plan?

Hon. Yasir Naqvi: I want to thank the member from Davenport for asking a very important question. Too many people across Ontario know what it's like to try to get tickets for their favourite band or sports team, only to find out that the tickets are sold out in seconds and are being resold at an inflated price on the secondary market. What happened with Tragically Hip tickets this summer is a case in point.

It personally really bugged me that fans weren't getting a fair shot at buying those tickets. I was really inspired by the MPP from Kingston and the Islands, who identified why this is happening. Scalper bots were buying up huge numbers of tickets in seconds with just a few clicks of a mouse.

This member had a great idea, that we need to ban scalper bots. I would like to thank the member for her hard work on this issue and for her idea that will help fans across Ontario.

I'm pleased to let this House know that, building on the work of the member from Kingston and the Islands, I'm committed to taking action as the Attorney General. This spring, I will be introducing legislation that would, if passed, ban scalper bots.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Thank you. Supplementary?

Mrs. Cristina Martins: I want to thank the Attorney General for his response. I'm pleased to hear that our government is committed to taking action on this issue and building on the work started by the outstanding member from Kingston and the Islands. I think everyone in this House would agree that this member had a great idea, and I would personally like to thank her for all of her great work, so thank you, Sophie.

By banning scalper bots, our government is sending a clear message to fans that we believe they deserve a fair shot at buying tickets. I know people in my riding of Davenport will be very happy with this news, especially when the next big show comes to town. I also know that both the member from Kingston and the Islands and the Attorney General want to increase transparency in the ticket selling industry.

While I know this will be a difficult task, can the Attorney General tell us more about our government's plan to ban scalper bots and the work he will be doing over the coming months?

Hon. Yasir Naqvi: Again, thanks to the member from Davenport for asking this important question. Speaker, the member is right. This will be a challenging task. There is no silver bullet to this problem, but there's also no excuse for inaction. Over the coming months, I will be seeking input from people all across the industry and from fans with targeted consultations. We need to hear from primary ticket sellers, from artists and venues, from consumer protection groups, from law enforcement and, most importantly, from fans. I'll also be working closely with the MPP from Kingston and the Islands and relying on her expertise and the information she gathered as she was developing her private member's bill.

We know that this problem is not unique to Ontario, so we'll also be looking at other jurisdictions who have taken on this fight. I'll be reaching out to my counterpart in New York state to discuss the findings of his recent investigation into this issue. I'm confident that the legislation we will introduce next spring will transform the ticket-selling industry.

BY-ELECTION IN SUDBURY

Ms. Catherine Fife: My question is to the Premier. Are the allegations as reported in the Sudbury Star regarding Mr. Thibeault and his candidacy for the Liberal Party true?

Hon. Kathleen O. Wynne: Attorney General.

Hon. Yasir Naqvi: Once again to the member opposite: This matter is before the courts and it would be highly inappropriate to engage in any conversation or speculation around these matters. We should respect the responsibility of the courts and let them deal with this matter.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Supplementary?

Ms. Catherine Fife: I don't think it's appropriate for the government to tell us what is an appropriate question in this House.

Again, I will ask the Premier: Does the Premier think it is appropriate to offer a cabinet position in exchange for a political favour?

Hon. Yasir Naqvi: I don't think there's ever any room or place in this House to engage in speculation either. Speaker, you relied on a standing order rule that clearly outlines the sub judice rule, clearly outlines the supremacy of our court and the respect for our court. I know the member respects the process and respects the rule. I'm just urging all members, as Attorney General of this province, that we should let the matters be heard before the court of law.

FINANCIAL LITERACY

Mr. Lou Rinaldi: My question is to the Minister of Education. We have a lot to be proud of when it comes to students' achievements, thanks in large part to our great educators and staff. Our schools are recognized across the country and around the world for excellence in education, and this is something we are extremely proud of.

I understand that November 1 marked the beginning of Financial Literacy Month. As we all know, preparing students to be financially literate is essential to student success and a stronger economy.

Speaker, through you to the minister: Can you tell us more about the importance of financial literacy and what this means for our students?

Hon. Mitzie Hunter: I want to thank the member for that really great and timely question, as we've just kicked off Financial Literacy Month here in Ontario. Financial Literacy Month is the perfect opportunity to highlight the importance of this topic.

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Interjections.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): The member from Ancaster, come to order.

The member from Hamilton East-Stoney Creek will withdraw.

Mr. Paul Miller: Withdraw what? What am I withdrawing?

Interjection.

Mr. Paul Miller: Okay, I withdraw.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Thank you, Minister?

Hon. Mitzie Hunter: Yesterday I had a chance to meet Prakash and Tom from the Toronto Youth Cabinet. It was truly inspiring to hear the stories behind their motivation to broaden access to financial knowledge for all students across the province. We spoke about integrating more financial literacy into the grade 10 careers curriculum.

I'll have more to say about that in the coming days.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Supplementary?

Mr. Lou Rinaldi: Thank you, Minister.

We all have a role in helping our kids learn about financial literacy.

Hon. David Zimmer: Point of order: The member from Hamilton East—

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): The member will take his seat. I do not entertain points of order unless I know that it is an important issue.

Hon. David Zimmer: It is.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): The Minister of Indigenous Relations is warned.

Carry on.

Mr. Lou Rinaldi: I'm pleased to hear that students in my riding are learning about sound money management, responsible financial decision-making and planning for the unexpected.

Minister, I couldn't agree more when you talk about the need to prepare our children to be financially literate and effectively contributing citizens in our ever-more-complex global economy. Minister, can you please tell us more about what the government is doing to broaden the financial knowledge and skills of our students?

Hon. Mitzie Hunter: We have so many grade 9 students here today with us. For them and for students across the province, financial literacy means having the knowledge and the skills to take responsibility for managing personal finances. Most importantly, it means participating in society as knowledgeable, responsible citizens who can confidently make decisions about where and how to invest their money.

We all have a role in helping our kids to learn about financial literacy. I'm pleased to hear that students in my riding are learning about sound money management, responsible financial decision-making and planning.

In 2011, our government committed to making financial literacy a part of every student's learning, from grades 4 to 12, by way of financial literacy education initiatives. That means that students across grades are learning about saving, spending and investing money—

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Thank you. New question.

BY-ELECTION IN SUDBURY

M^{me} France Gélinas: Ma question est pour la première ministre.

What was Ms. Sorbara's role in the candidacy of Mr. Thibeault for the Liberal Party?

Hon. Kathleen O. Wynne: Attorney General.

Hon. Yasir Naqvi: As I've stated earlier, this matter is before the courts. It would be highly inappropriate to answer any questions relating to a matter that will be subject to a court proceeding, as we know. Therefore, Speaker, it's not appropriate for us to engage in this discussion in the House.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Supplementary.

M^{me} France Gélinas: Back to the Premier: What was Ms. Sorbara's role in the appointment of Mr. Thibeault to cabinet?

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Attorney General.

Hon. Yasir Naqvi: This matter is before the courts. It would be highly inappropriate to answer any questions.

HOSPITAL SERVICES

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): New question. The member from Durham.

Mr. Granville Anderson: Thank you, Speaker. My question is—

Interjection.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Just a minute. The chief government whip is warned.

Carry on.

Mr. Granville Anderson: My question is for the Minister of Health and Long-Term Care. Minister, in my great riding of Durham we have seen unprecedented investment from our government: from the 407 East expansion to a GO train to Courtice and Bowmanville and, most recently, \$12.8 billion for the refurbishment of Darlington. The growth has been tremendous, with more new families moving in every day. It is a very exciting time to serve as MPP for Durham.

As you recall, we have spoken on many occasions about moving forward with expanding the Bowmanville hospital, one of my top priorities. We have worked closely with Lakeridge Health administration, the foundation board, local businesses, as well as countless constituents and stakeholders to further this project. I am very proud of how far we have come, and I thank you and your staff for their support along the way.

Now, in spite of all this hard work, the Ontario Health Coalition is saying that the Ajax and Lakeridge Health integration will lead to a reduction in health services in both the Bowmanville and Port Perry hospitals—

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Thank you.

Minister of Health and Long-Term Care.

Hon. Eric Hoskins: I want to thank the member from Durham. He has been an absolute champion for the Bowmanville hospital. We've had meetings; we've had discussions.

But this gives me the opportunity to set the record straight. Let me be clear: The Bowmanville hospital is not closing, and they will not experience any reduction in services, or cuts. There are no plans whatsoever to change the programs or the services and certainly not to close that hospital. In fact, I've received a new proposal for an emergency department at the Bowmanville hospital, and I look forward to continuing consultations with Bowmanville and Lakeridge on the future possibilities for the ER.

In contrast to what the Ontario Health Coalition is saying, the proposed integration of the Scarborough Hospital, the Rouge Valley Health System and Lakeridge will in fact improve and expand services across Scarborough and Durham.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Supplementary?

Mr. Granville Anderson: Thank you, Minister. That's great news. I am glad that we are able to assure residents that the quality of their health care in Durham will improve under the integration. There has been too much misinformation.

Would you be able to provide some insight to my residents as to how the decision for hospital integration was made?

Hon. Eric Hoskins: Thank you again to the member from Durham for that question. These decisions, of course, were not made lightly. They followed a long consultation process. There's a panel that was struck that provided recommendations to us earlier this year—the Scarborough/West Durham Panel. Advice was also provided by the Central East Local Health Integration Network.

I want to commend and congratulate the many hospital boards and leadership over the past few months in involving their communities to prepare for this next step. Over the next several months, the boards, hospital staff and physicians will continue to work collaboratively to develop the hospital structures required, again, to improve the delivery and quality of health services to both the Scarborough and the Durham communities.

BY-ELECTION IN SUDBURY

Mr. Jagmeet Singh: This question is to the Premier. We are seeing an unprecedented scenario in this province. The amount of scandal that this government is responsible for committing is just outrageous. Today is a testament to that frustration.

We know already—it's very clear in the Election Act—that to directly or indirectly give or procure an inducement to get someone to run is a contravention of the Election Act. But we want to know from the Premier or the Attorney General: Under this act, is the acceptance of an inducement to office, is the acceptance of something in exchange for becoming a candidate a violation of the Election Act? My question is to the Premier: Is the acceptance in and of itself a violation of the Election Act?

Hon. Kathleen O. Wynne: Attorney General.

Hon. Yasir Naqvi: Once again, the Premier has spoken on this matter. She has spoken in this House and she has spoken to the media. These are serious allegations, and this is not the place to litigate these allegations. A court of law is the appropriate venue. I know that the member opposite knows that.

I urge all members, as I've said throughout the entire question period, to respect our own standing order rules, to respect our courts and to let this matter be dealt with in a court of law.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Supplementary?

Mr. Jagmeet Singh: Mr. Speaker, the response provided by the Attorney General is not in the best interests of the people of Ontario. It may be in the best interests of the Liberal Party, though.

We know very well, from previous experience, that the Ornge scandal results weren't obtained by a court investigation. The results, getting to the bottom of the truth, were obtained here in this Legislative Assembly, through questions in committee, through questions in this House. There is a strong tradition of getting to the truth

and providing justice for the people of Ontario by asking questions in this assembly.

My question again is, do the Attorney General and the Premier believe that the acceptance of an inducement to an office, to a position, is a contravention of the Election Act, and is the Attorney General providing any sort of guidance or legal representation or advice to anyone involved in this circumstance?

Hon. Yasir Naqvi: Once again, the difference in this matter is that there are allegations and there are charges that are laid by the police. Therefore, this matter is squarely within the jurisdiction of the court. It will be up to a court to determine whether or not those allegations have been proven in a court of law.

I've also been very clear that this matter is not being dealt with by the Ministry of the Attorney General. It's being dealt with independently through the Public Prosecution Service of Canada. I stated that first thing yesterday morning and I will repeat again: This is not being dealt with—the persons accused have their own counsel, and the prosecution is being handled by the Public Prosecution Service of Canada.

RECEPTION

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Unless it's a point of order, it's over.

Mr. John Fraser: Point of order.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Point of order, the member from Ottawa South.

Mr. John Fraser: I just want to remind everyone that Hospice Palliative Care Ontario is having their reception in room 228 at 5 o'clock tonight, and please come by. Thank you.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): There are no deferred votes. This House stands recessed until 3 p.m. this afternoon.

The House recessed from 1151 to 1500.

INTRODUCTION OF VISITORS

Mrs. Gila Martow: I'm very pleased to welcome my father, Alex Gladstone, in the plaid shirt, in the members' gallery. Thank you for visiting.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): I would have let you say a couple more words, if you wanted to.

Mrs. Gila Martow: My wonderful, lovely father, whom I'm going to be speaking about in my francophone immigration speech.

Mr. Wayne Gates: I'd like to introduce three visitors from my riding today: Joe Miszk; his wife, Bernadette Miszk; and his inspirational daughter, Julianne Miszk. I'll be speaking more about her in my member's statement shortly. Joe, Bernadette, Julianne: Welcome to Queen's Park.

Mr. Granville Anderson: It gives me great pleasure to welcome a dear friend of mine, Diana Sanginesi, and her niece, Melanie Sanginesi. Welcome.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Welcome. We're glad you're here.

L'hon. Marie-France Lalonde: Il me fait bien plaisir d'accueillir, dans les prochaines minutes, ici à l'Assemblée plusieurs intervenants communautaires au niveau de la Semaine nationale de l'immigration francophone qu'on célèbre : M^{me} Lise Marie Baudry et M. Félix Corriveau du Centre francophone de Toronto; le Consulat général de France à Toronto; de La Passerelle, Madou, Camille, Roberto, et Cathy; du Collège Boréal, Sylvie Beauvais; du Réseau de soutien à l'immigration francophone du Centre Sud-Ouest, M. Alain Do Bi; et de l'AFO, le nouveau président, M. Carol Jolin.

Le Président (L'hon. Dave Levac): Merci beaucoup. Bienvenue.

MEMBERS' STATEMENTS

WILFRID LAURIER UNIVERSITY

Mr. Ted Arnott: The promise of the future in Ontario calls us to pursue excellence in post-secondary education, leading to good career-track job opportunities for graduates and a stronger, innovation-based economy for the province. This goal requires partnership and vision. That's why we were so excited to hear the government's commitment to build a new university campus in Halton. I was glad to be in attendance when the announcement was made last Wednesday in Milton.

Wilfrid Laurier University's president, Max Blouw, says, "A university campus will strengthen and complement the town of Milton's vision of a diversified workforce to drive economic prosperity and meet the evolving needs of Ontario's economy."

Region of Halton Chair Gary Carr, who spoke at the announcement, has provided strong, effective leadership on regional council in support of this proposal. Mayors Gord Krantz and Rick Bonnette have also been vocal advocates, and we thank them as well.

As members will recall, in recent months I've been publicly urging the government to approve Laurier's proposal for a new Milton campus to give our students another post-secondary education option close to home.

While the minister announced a call for proposals for this coming January, she did not indicate any time frame for when the new campus will be completed and open for students. We all know that this is a long-term project and it won't be built overnight, but surely Milton residents and Laurier supporters deserve to know the government's timetable for completion of the new campus. I urge the minister to announce this publicly and soon. Let's work together to build the promise of the future in Ontario.

JULIANNE MISZK

Mr. Wayne Gates: I rise today to let everyone in this House know about an 18-year-old girl from my riding who is a hero and an inspiration. She just loves to run.

Our hero's name is Julianne Miszk. Julianne was born with a very rare genetic disorder which caused her to suffer through multiple surgeries and infections. Joe and Bernadette are her incredible parents.

Just a few years ago, she realized she had a passion for running, and run she has. With the help of her coach, Niagara Falls city councillor and teacher at St. Mike's Victor Pietrangelo, who runs these races beside Julianne, she has gone on to be a four-time Ontario Federation of School Athletic Associations para cross-country champion and also a three-time OFSAA track and field champion. Her latest victory came at SOSSA last Thursday.

Just six weeks ago, Julianne discovered she had a rare form of bone cancer in her jaw. She is going through chemo and will have to have a bone from her calf transplanted into her jaw. It's tough when someone has to battle cancer, let alone someone so young and with so much talent.

On Thursday, the students at St. Mike's Catholic high school were there when Julianne crossed the finish line, wearing her number, 320. The students all came to support her. They were there chanting Julianne's name and holding signs that said, "You can do it," or, "Mind over matter," or simply, "Be strong."

We are all so proud to say that not only did Julianne run at SOSSA last Thursday, but this Saturday she will be running again at OFSAA in Port Hope.

Well, Julianne, we all know that you will do it again, because you are so strong. We are all so proud to have you here with us today. We wish you all the best. Have fun on Saturday, and we'll be running with you in spirit.

GREENBELT

Mr. James J. Bradley: Before I commence the statement, I would like to join with the member for Niagara Falls and all members in wishing her the very, very best. This is a real story of courage. I thank you for your indulgence in allowing me, as one of the members, to join with the member for Niagara Falls in his wonderful tribute.

I am pleased to rise in the Legislature today to recognize our collective efforts to protect water, farmland and nature in Ontario.

I applaud the government for committing to grow the greenbelt by adding 21 urban river valleys and seven coastal wetlands. This commitment builds on the work of previous governments in protecting the Oak Ridges moraine and Niagara Escarpment. Ensuring that the sources of our water and food are protected is truly something on which we can all agree, no matter what party we represent.

Today, I stand here in support of the 26,000 Ontarians and 120 organizations who are calling on all parties to protect our water supplies by growing the greenbelt. We have letters of support from Niagara to Northumberland, Simcoe to Wellington, and from every community in the greater Golden Horseshoe. We have support from ratepayers' associations, agricultural groups, youth groups,

environmental organizations and others. They're asking for a science-based expansion of the greenbelt to include a bluebelt of vulnerable water supplies and features. The bluebelt would protect drinking water supplies for millions of residents and support our economic powerhouse, Ontario's farmers and grape growers. It would also make our region more resilient to extreme weather and climate change.

The greenbelt is already overwhelmingly popular. More than 90% of Ontarians agree with it. This popular groundswell shows that now is the right time to grow the greenbelt.

HUMAN TRAFFICKING

Ms. Laurie Scott: I rise today to recognize the amazing work of members of 53 police services across Canada, most of them in Ontario, who recently conducted Operation Northern Spotlight. This important multi-jurisdictional effort, which crossed provincial and international borders, targeted the sex trade and, in particular, human sex trafficking.

As noted in the official report, during coordinated investigations over a six-day period, police charged 47 people with over 78 offences. Police were also able to ensure the safety of 20 people who had been working in the sex trade as a minor or against their will, including some as young as 14 years old and most of them under 19.

The evil of human sex trafficking is in our neighbourhoods. It's in every corner of Ontario, which has been recognized as a major hub of human sex trafficking in Canada.

As I travel across our province, I find myself speaking with former victims, who felt like they had no hope of escaping this invisible chain of modern-day slavery. We must continue to do everything in our power to support our police officers and victim service organizations as they deal with this scourge.

Once again, I want to express my gratitude for the dedication of our police services involved in Operation Northern Spotlight. They brought much-needed attention to the issue of human sex trafficking. More importantly, they saved 20 young people from the clutches of brutal thugs who will, hopefully, face the full force of justice in our courts.

1510

GENTLEMEN'S KNITTING CHALLENGE

Mr. Michael Mantha: Speaker, let me set this up for you. Imagine the Elliot Lake Gentlemen's Knitting Challenge as the setting. We have a new business that has been opened up by Maya Piunno in Elliot Lake. She has opened up The Knitting Room, promoting a lot of yarn, fibre and the opportunity to learn new skills. To help her out, I challenged the editor of the Standard, who is Kevin McSheffrey; I challenged ELNOS representative William Elliott; I challenged the mayor, Dan Marchisella; and I also challenged the Elliot Lake fire chief, John Thomas.

And do you know what? They answered my call. They came in, and William Elliott came in with the extra ante. He said, "Why don't you guys all put in \$100 apiece and the winner gets to allocate those dollars towards a worthy cause in Elliot Lake?"

Well, we all got together, Mr. Speaker, and let me tell you, you had a bunch of burly boys, tied up in yarn, making a scarf and having a lot of fun doing it. We didn't have a problem doing it. As a matter of fact, I just delivered my final product to our leader, Andrea Horwath, yesterday and she is wearing it quite proudly.

Do you know who the winner is at the end of the day? The Elliot Lake food bank. The Elliot Lake food bank received the funds that were raised throughout the day. Over \$700 was raised during the day, and individuals who came to the event all contributed a non-perishable food item. It was a fantastic event.

Step out of your comfort zone: Knit a scarf and help your food banks. It's a lot of fun.

MISSISSAUGA BOARD OF CHINESE PROFESSIONALS AND BUSINESSES

Mrs. Amrit Mangat: This past Sunday, I was pleased to attend the 18th Phoenix Ball, which is hosted each year by the Mississauga Board of Chinese Professionals and Businesses, known as the CPB. This year's charity ball attracted over 450 patrons from throughout the GTA, including many from my own diverse riding of Mississauga-Brampton South. Since 1999, in fact, this organization and its foundation have raised over \$2 million for worthy causes. This year, proceeds will go to the Yee Hong Centre for Geriatric Care in my riding.

I would like to thank the CPB for its years of charitable work as well as its representation of an important business community in the region. I also thank the CPB board members, past and present, for their public spirit, vision and compassion for others. They are, as individuals and as an organization, wonderful examples of active business leadership in the community.

Thank you, CPB, for your great work. Keep up the good work. I'm very proud of you.

VOLUNTEERS

Mr. Michael Harris: As we join with our veterans, our heroes, to recognize the passage of the Remembrance Week Act here at Queen's Park, I wanted to take the opportunity to also recognize all of those who work so hard all year long to honour our military men and women in ceremonies, dinners and get-togethers throughout Waterloo region. While Remembrance Week gives us an annual opportunity to thank the past and present members of our armed forces, most importantly those who have made the ultimate sacrifice, it's the work of those unrecognized volunteers from our area halls, churches, temples and Legions that ensure those opportunities are shared across the area in our community. There are so many who work tirelessly to provide the stages on which residents from across Waterloo region

are able to say thank you, and I want to say a big thank you to them.

Thank you those working to pull together events on Saturday, when remembrance services will take place at New Dundee Public School, followed by the New Hamburg 19th annual veterans' appreciation dinner later in the evening over at the Royal Canadian Legion Branch 532, put on by the ladies' auxiliary. Also, thanks to the volunteers working on Sunday's Linwood remembrance service and the Elmira Remembrance Day parade put on by the Elmira Legion Branch 469.

Thank you to all those participating in our local Sikh Remembrance Day ceremony to remember our Canadian war heroes and Canadian sacrifices while celebrating the Sikh tradition of military service.

And thank you to the many volunteers throughout our region who will be busy preparing November 11 ceremonies in New Hamburg, Elmira, Kitchener and Waterloo. Thank you for your service that allows us to thank all of our veterans for theirs.

LONG-TERM CARE

M^{me} France Gélinas: After almost 70 years of marriage, Jessie and Clarence have now been separated by what I call our heartless long-term-care system. You see, Speaker, for the last eight years, they both lived at Shalom Gardens, a retirement home in Grimsby, and they believed that they would move to the Shalom Manor on-site if they ever needed long-term care. How wrong can two good people be?

In August, Clarence fell and his needs changed. He got admitted to Shalom Manor, close to his wife. His wife could not cope anymore in the retirement home and the family chose to put her in the nursing home with her husband.

The problem is, the CCAC said, "You have to put at least four choices on your application." Well, sure enough, Jessie was sent to a nursing home in St. Catharines, away from her husband. Since August, the family has pleaded with anybody who would listen to them to bring their mom and dad back together at Shalom Manor.

Spousal reunification, Speaker, comes after crisis. The long-term-care system in their community is in crisis all the time. The chance of Jessie and Clarence being reunited is zero because there will always be a crisis ahead of them.

This is wrong. The system has to be changed. The minister must intervene and make sure that those two people are allowed to live their lives together, like they did 70 years ago when they said yes to marriage. They are not the first ones to go through this. It has to change. It has to change now.

ROBERT AINSLEY CAVANAGH

Mr. John Fraser: I want to express my thanks to the member from Simcoe-Grey, who asked the member

from Parkdale-High Park and myself to join him on an act to proclaim Remembrance Week. I feel very honoured to have joined them on this bill. In this House, we're at our best when we come together to give expression to those things that are important to all of us, to all the people we serve. Certainly remembering those who served and continue to serve us is one of those things.

When we remember, we remember family—and families. I want to give a very brief story about the uncle that my wife, Linda, never knew.

Robert Ainsley Cavanagh, the brother of Yvonne Hooper—then Yvonne Cavanagh—enlisted underage for the Second World War. He served as a navy commando—a naval seaman—and was killed at Dieppe. My mother-in-law, Yvonne, who is 96—I'm going to get in trouble for saying that now if she hears this—remembers. He is alive in her heart, and she's done a lot to keep that there for 96 years. We've recognized that in our family by our granddaughter Sloane having the second name Ainsley.

What I want to say is that many families are touched—we're all touched—by these acts of sacrifice, and continuing acts of sacrifice, that people are making, and I hope that next week, in Remembrance Week, we all have an opportunity to reflect on the importance of that.

ANNUAL REPORT, OMBUDSMAN

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): I beg to inform the House that the following report was tabled: the 2015-16 annual report of the Ombudsman of Ontario.

REPORTS BY COMMITTEES

STANDING COMMITTEE ON REGULATIONS AND PRIVATE BILLS

Mr. Ted McMeekin: I beg leave to present a report from the Standing Committee on Regulations and Private Bills and move its adoption. I give it to Ancaster-Dundas-Flamborough-Westdale page Kepler for delivery to the table.

The Clerk-at-the-Table (Mr. William Short): Your committee begs to report the following bills without amendment:

Bill Pr47, An Act to revive 289619 Ontario Limited.

Bill Pr48, An Act to revive Liberty Tire Recycling Canada I Ltd.

Bill Pr49, An Act to revive Stoneridge Development Corporation.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Shall the report be received and adopted? Agreed? Carried.

Report adopted.

STANDING COMMITTEE ON SOCIAL POLICY

Mr. Peter Tabuns: I beg leave to present a report from the Standing Committee on Social Policy and move its adoption—to be brought to the table by page John.

The Clerk-at-the-Table (Mr. William Short): Your committee begs to report the following bill, as amended:

Bill 28, An Act to amend the Children's Law Reform Act, the Vital Statistics Act and various other Acts respecting parentage and related registrations / Projet de loi 28, Loi modifiant la Loi portant réforme du droit de l'enfance, la Loi sur les statistiques de l'état civil et diverses autres lois en ce qui concerne la filiation et les enregistrements connexes.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Shall the report be received and adopted? Agreed? Carried.

Report adopted.

1520

INTRODUCTION OF BILLS

KATELYNN'S PRINCIPLE ACT (DECISIONS AFFECTING CHILDREN), 2016

LOI DE 2016 SUR LE PRINCIPE DE KATELYNN (DÉCISIONS CONCERNANT DES ENFANTS)

Miss Taylor moved first reading of the following bill:

Bill 57, An Act to enshrine Katelynn's Principle as the guiding principle for decisions regarding children / Projet de loi 57, Loi visant à faire du Principe de Katelynn le principe directeur des décisions concernant des enfants.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Is it the pleasure of the House that the motion carry? Carried.

First reading agreed to.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): The member for a short statement.

Miss Monique Taylor: The bill enacts the Katelynn's Principle Act (Decisions Affecting Children), 2016. The act requires that any person making a decision under Ontario legislation affecting children must apply Katelynn's principle when making the decision.

DELEGATED ADMINISTRATIVE AUTHORITIES ACCOUNTABILITY AND TRANSPARENCY ACT, 2016

LOI DE 2016 SUR LA RESPONSABILISATION ET LA TRANSPARENCE DES ORGANISMES D'APPLICATION DÉLÉGATAIRES

Mr. McDonell moved first reading of the following bill:

Bill 58, An Act to amend various Acts with respect to delegated administrative authorities / Projet de loi 58, Loi modifiant diverses lois en ce qui concerne les organismes d'application délégataires.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Is it the pleasure of the House that the motion carry? Carried.

First reading agreed to.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): The member for a short statement.

Mr. Jim McDonell: Currently in the Condominium Act, 1998, the Condominium Management Services Act, 2015, the Delegated Administrative Authorities Act, 2012, and the Safety and Consumer Statutes Administration Act, 1996, the Lieutenant Governor in Council can delegate the administration of the act or certain specified acts to an administrative authority. In addition, under each of the Ontario New Home Warranties Plan Act, the Ontario Underground Infrastructure Notification System Act, 2012, the Technical Standards and Safety Act, 2000, and the Vintners Quality Alliance Act, 1999, there is administrative authority responsibility for administering under the act.

The bill deals with all of those administrative authorities. Currently, the minister responsible for administering each act can appoint one or more members to the board of directors of the administrative authority. The bill transfers that power to the Lieutenant Governor in Council.

The bill also requires the Auditor General to do an annual audit of these accounts and financial transactions of each administrative authority. The bill amends the Freedom of Information and Protection of Privacy Act to make administrative authorities institutes that are subject to that act, and the bill makes the Ombudsman Act and the disclosure requirements of the Public Sector Salary Disclosure Act, 1996, applicable to administrative authorities.

STATEMENTS BY THE MINISTRY AND RESPONSES

IMMIGRATION FRANCOPHONE FRANCOPHONE IMMIGRATION

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): The Minister of Government and Consumer Services.

L'hon. Marie-France Lalonde: Et ministre déléguée aux Affaires francophones, monsieur le Président.

Le Président (L'hon. Dave Levac): Merci beaucoup. Je m'excuse.

L'hon. Marie-France Lalonde: Oh, c'est correct.

C'est avec beaucoup de fierté que je m'adresse aujourd'hui à l'ensemble de mes collègues de l'Assemblée législative afin de souligner de façon officielle la quatrième édition de la Semaine nationale de l'immigration francophone.

J'aimerais remercier le travail extraordinaire des agences et organisations communautaires de l'Ontario, et plus particulièrement j'aimerais ressouigner la présence ici à l'Assemblée de M^{me} Lise Marie Baudry du Centre francophone de Toronto et de M. Félix Corriveau; du Consulat général de France à Toronto; des gens de La Passerelle qui sont ici; des gens du Collège Boréal, centre-sud-ouest; aussi, des gens du Réseau de soutien à

l'immigration francophone du Centre-Sud-Ouest et M. Alain Do Bi; du nouveau président de l'AFO, M. Carol Jolin; et aussi la présence de Stewart Kiff qui est avec nous. Merci beaucoup d'être ici aujourd'hui.

Cette semaine nous offre, à tous et à toutes, une superbe occasion de rendre hommage aux communautés francophones d'ici et d'ailleurs afin de rappeler que les nouveaux arrivants francophones contribuent grandement à l'enrichissement de notre province. Comme le dit si bien la thématique de la semaine, l'immigration francophone est « Une diversité qui nous unit ».

Grâce à l'apport de cette diversité, la population francophone est en plein essor. Les Franco-Ontariennes et les Franco-Ontariens représentent maintenant 4,8 % de la population de l'Ontario et sont actifs dans tous les domaines, que ce soit économique, culturel ou social. Par exemple, dans certains milieux urbains comme Toronto, près de la moitié des francophones sont nés à l'extérieur du Canada. La présence accrue d'immigrants nous permet de tisser des liens de proximité étroits avec une communauté de plus de 275 millions de locuteurs de français répartis à travers la province et le monde. C'est tout l'Ontario qui bénéficie de la diversité accrue de la population francophone, car elle contribue à la prospérité économique, sociale, culturelle et humaine de notre province.

Vous le savez : l'Ontario s'est fixé un objectif de 5 % d'immigration francophone. Le gouvernement reconnaît l'importance de cet objectif et s'engage à poser les gestes nécessaires pour en faciliter graduellement l'atteinte. D'ailleurs, en juin dernier nous avons confirmé la priorisation des travailleurs qualifiés francophones dans le cadre du programme fédéral Mobilité francophone. Aussi, nous avons mis sur pied un comité d'experts sur l'immigration francophone dont le mandat est de proposer des priorités et des pistes de solution en vue de faire progresser la province au chapitre de l'immigration francophone.

Je rappelle aussi que l'Ontario travaille de très près avec les autres provinces et territoires au sein de la Conférence ministérielle sur la francophonie canadienne pour faire avancer le dossier de l'immigration francophone à l'échelle pancanadienne. Nous saluons également la déclaration unanime de l'ensemble des premiers ministres provinciaux et territoriaux, lors du Conseil de la fédération en juin dernier, soulignant l'importance de la cible de 5 % en immigration francophone hors Québec.

L'ensemble de ces gestes, et bien d'autres à venir, démontre que l'Ontario voit l'immigration francophone comme un atout important dans la réalisation de notre plan visant à stimuler notre économie, créer des emplois et améliorer la vie quotidienne de notre population.

Avant de conclure cette allocution, je m'en voudrais de ne pas mentionner la demande d'adhésion de l'Ontario comme membre observateur de l'Organisation internationale de la Francophonie. Si cette demande était approuvée en novembre prochain, au Sommet de la Francophonie internationale à Madagascar, la visibilité

de l'Ontario français serait rehaussée auprès des 80 États et gouvernements membres de l'OIF et de leur 900 millions de citoyens, dont 275 millions de locuteurs francophones. Ce serait là une tribune de choix pour promouvoir les avantages de l'Ontario français et de faire mieux connaître la province comme terre d'accueil pour les francophones venus d'ailleurs.

L'immigration francophone favorise le développement de toute notre province et elle continue d'avoir un effet porteur extrêmement important. Elle contribue à la diversité et à la richesse de nos communautés, et aujourd'hui elle nous assure un avenir dynamique et prospère.

J'invite donc tous mes collègues ici à l'Assemblée législative à célébrer cette semaine de l'immigration francophone et à rendre hommage à tous ces hommes et ces femmes, aux jeunes et moins jeunes, qui ont choisi de vivre en Ontario ou qui choisiront de s'y établir.

1530

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): The Minister of Citizenship and Immigration.

Hon. Laura Albanese: National Francophone Immigration Week takes place from October 30 to November 5 this year. This week allows us to reflect on the importance of francophone immigration and the role that it has played in helping to create the strong and vibrant Ontario that we enjoy today.

Let me begin with some historical context. In 1613, French explorer Samuel de Champlain travelled and mapped parts of Ontario. He followed the water: the Ottawa River, Lake Nipissing, the Great Lakes and Georgian Bay. Ce voyage a dû être merveilleux et fascinant.

Des francophones immigrent au Canada depuis plus de 400 ans. C'est une réalisation extraordinaire.

Today, Ontario's francophone community is the largest in Canada outside of Quebec. In fact, there are nearly 612,000 francophones living in Ontario who contribute to our communities and economy as industry leaders, elected representatives, teachers, entertainers and academics.

This year, as every year, on September 25, Ontario celebrated Franco-Ontarian Day to honour people whose social, economic, political and cultural contributions make a difference in the francophone community and in Ontario as a whole.

Je suis fière des mécanismes de soutien que notre gouvernement a créés pour les francophones et leurs familles.

This month also marks the 30th anniversary of the French Language Services Act, 1986—legislation that ensures that Franco-Ontarians receive services in French in their daily lives. In June 2015, the city of Markham became the 26th area in Ontario to be designated under the act. This means that provincial ministries, agencies and third-party service providers will provide French-language services to the francophone community in that area.

Plus de 4 000 francophones vivent dans la ville de Markham et plus de 16 000 dans la région de York.

A three-year transition period is under way to build the French-language service capacity required under the act. My ministry is actively involved in the French-language services implementation committee in Markham. More than 80% of Franco-Ontarians now live in a designated area under the French Language Services Act.

Also in 1986, we established the Office of Franco-phone Affairs to ensure that the needs of Franco-Ontarians are taken into account in public policies and programs. We have ensured that francophones can access government services in French, and learn and study in French.

Il y a deux semaines, j'ai annoncé que notre gouvernement investira jusqu'à 60 millions de dollars cette année pour financer la formation linguistique des nouveaux arrivants dans nos deux langues officielles.

This investment of \$60 million means that immigrants who wish to learn French can take advantage of free French-language classes regardless of how long they have been in Ontario. Our school system offers both dedicated French-language education and vibrant immersion programs that introduce French to English-speaking children.

Notre gouvernement fait la promotion de l'Ontario comme un endroit attrayant pour les francophones de partout dans le monde pour y vivre, y travailler et y élever une famille.

We have expanded our presence at Destination Canada in France and Belgium, an annual international francophone immigrant recruitment event taking place later this month.

Il s'agit d'une tribune essentielle pour faire connaître l'Ontario comme une destination de choix auprès d'immigrants éventuels. This is a key forum to promote Ontario as a destination of choice to potential immigrants.

My ministry also participated last June in Canadian Week, hosted by the embassy of Canada in Paris, France. This cultural, educational and immigration-focused event helps to attract French-speaking immigrants. In addition, we deliver webinars for prospective immigrants via the Canadian embassy in France to a broad range of countries, including Algeria, Belgium, Cameroon, Congo, Tunisia, Morocco, Senegal and Luxembourg.

We have also created, for the first time, a two-page advertorial in L'Express magazine in its annual "settling in Canada" edition to promote Ontario as a destination of choice in which to live, work and raise a family.

Nous ne ménageons aucun effort pour encourager des professionnels francophones hautement qualifiés à s'établir ici.

In 2015, my ministry launched the Ontario Express Entry: French-speaking skilled worker stream under the Ontario Immigrant Nominee Program. This stream helps to attract highly skilled French-speaking candidates who can succeed in Ontario.

We are also working with our municipal stakeholders to attract francophone immigrants and improve their

access to services in French. Through the Municipal Immigration Information Online Program, we provide funding for an informative website that contains franco-phone immigration opportunities and profiles communities with French-language services. Launched in 2013, this is a partnership with 19 municipalities that have francophone communities. Our next step is to increase the reach of this website and expand on the information that it provides for prospective immigrants.

My ministry also recently announced \$1.37 million in funding through the Newcomer Settlement Program to support eight francophone organizations across the province to provide service to French-speaking newcomers.

As you can see, Mr. Speaker, we have much to be proud of and to celebrate during this month.

Alors que nous soulignons la Semaine nationale de l'immigration francophone, je tiens à dire merci beaucoup—« thank you »—aux francophones et francophiles en Ontario qui font partie intégrante de notre province diversifiée et dynamique.

À tous les francophones partout dans le monde qui envisagent de s'établir dans notre province, je déclare : « Faites de l'Ontario votre nouvelle demeure. C'est un excellent choix. »

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): It is time for responses.

Réponses.

M^{me} Gila Martow: Je veux dire bienvenue premièrement à mon ami Stewart Kiff et le nouveau président de l'Assemblée de la francophonie de l'Ontario, M. Carol Jolin. Bienvenue à l'Assemblée.

Je suis heureuse de prendre la parole sur l'immigration francophone en Ontario. Il est important de reconnaître les contributions que les immigrants francophones apportent à notre province alors que nous célébrons la quatrième Semaine nationale de l'immigration francophone du 30 octobre au 5 novembre.

Comme beaucoup d'entre nous ici, je suis une enfant d'immigrants. Mon père, qui est ici maintenant—M. Alex Gladstone—est né en Pologne et il est arrivé à Montréal quand il avait seulement cinq ans. Il a rapidement appris l'anglais, et comme un adulte qui travaillait pour le gouvernement fédéral comme météorologue, il était déterminé à maîtriser le français.

En Ontario, les communautés francophones veulent également voir la maîtrise de la langue française se poursuivre pour des générations à venir. Par contre, elles sont concernées quand il y a seulement une infime partie des immigrants de l'Ontario qui sont en mesure de converser en français.

C'est pour cette raison que les communautés francophones ont encouragé le gouvernement de l'Ontario à s'engager à un objectif de 5 % d'immigration francophone. Malheureusement, nous ne rencontrons que la moitié de cette cible.

Cependant, il ne suffit pas d'avoir simplement des objectifs arbitraires fixés. Nous devons trouver des façons de travailler avec les consultants en immigration et avec nos partenaires parlementaires dans les régions

francophones pour encourager le tourisme, le commerce et l'immigration.

Je veux féliciter encore une fois M^{me} Marie-France Lalonde pour avoir été élevée au Cabinet comme ministre des Services gouvernementaux et des Services aux consommateurs, et ministre des affaires francophones.

Conformément aux règlements de l'Assemblée parlementaire de la Francophonie, les ministres ne participent pas activement dans les affaires de l'APF. Par conséquent, le départ de M^{me} Lalonde nécessite la réaffectation de son poste de chargée de mission, région Amérique. À cause de tout ça, j'ai assumé la responsabilité.

Applause.

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M^{me} Gila Martow: Merci.

Il est certain que moi, une francophile, trouve la position plus difficile que la ministre, une Franco-Ontarienne, mais avec tous mes collègues franco-ontariens et franco-ontariennes ici à la législature, je vais trouver une mesure de succès, j'espère.

Merci beaucoup à tout le monde, et je veux dire seulement que si quelqu'un cherche des activités de la Semaine nationale de l'immigration francophone dans leur région, s'il vous plaît, visitez le site Webimmigrationfrancophone.ca.

Merci beaucoup, monsieur le Président, et joyeuse fête, tout le monde.

M^{me} France Gélinas: C'est un plaisir pour moi également de souligner la Semaine nationale de l'immigration francophone, qui a pour thème cette année « Une diversité qui nous unit », et je suis parfaitement en accord avec le thème.

Moi aussi, j'aimerais souligner des invités distingués qui sont ici avec nous, en commençant avec M. Carol Jolin, notre nouveau président élu à Sudbury—j'en suis très fière—la semaine dernière comme président de l'Association de la francophonie de l'Ontario; avec lui, M. Stewart Kiff; bien entendu, mes amis du Collège Boréal; et Lise Marie Baudry, la directrice générale du Centre francophone de Toronto.

Comme cela a été mentionné, le gouvernement a fixé un objectif de 5 % pour l'immigration francophone en Ontario. Je peux dire que M^{me} Madeleine Meilleur, la prédécesseure, avait annoncé 5 % d'immigration francophone, et on en était tous très fiers. Le ministre de l'Immigration du temps l'avait annoncé, lui aussi, et bien entendu, on avait fixé un comité pour obtenir le 5 %.

Malheureusement, on peut se donner un objectif, on peut confirmer l'objectif, on peut répéter l'objectif et on peut mettre des comités en place pour atteindre l'objectif, mais il faut passer de la parole aux actes, et ça n'a pas été fait. Les résultats sont là. On n'a pas atteint notre objectif de 5 %. On est à peine un peu plus de 2 %, et ça, c'est pitoyable. J'ai de la misère à concilier—moi aussi, je veux célébrer la Semaine nationale de l'immigration francophone, mais on a beaucoup de chemin à faire avant

une vraie célébration dans laquelle l'Ontario va rencontrer ses objectifs.

Il y a des exceptions à ça. Certainement, le Centre francophone de Toronto aide les nouveaux arrivants à faire du français leur langue d'insertion. Ils sont bons, ils ont les ressources, ils sont capables et ils ont du succès.

Malheureusement, je peux parler du Contact interculturel francophone de Sudbury, un organisme qui a eu beaucoup de succès à favoriser l'accueil. Ils mettaient en place des structures d'accueil, l'identification des nouveaux arrivants, le développement d'une trousse d'accueil et des séances d'orientation pour les nouveaux arrivants à Sudbury. Ils facilitaient leur intégration au niveau de la culture francophone ou des valeurs culturelles, des traditions du milieu, etc. Ils favorisaient ainsi leur accès aux services pour favoriser l'intégration.

Après que le gouvernement ait annoncé, réannoncé, confirmé et répété le 5 %, ils ont reçu une réponse à leur demande de fonds qui disait que le gouvernement ne financerait plus un organisme qui avait été en place pendant plus de 16 ans pour aider l'immigration francophone à Sudbury. Il ne reçoit plus de financement.

C'est beau de se fixer des objectifs, mais lorsqu'on a des organismes gagnants dans notre communauté qui aident les nouveaux arrivants à faire du français la langue d'insertion—c'est comme ça qu'on va arriver à nos buts, à nos objectifs de 5 %. En ce moment, on est loin de ça. Il y a des grands pas à faire.

Je sais que la ministre de l'Immigration a parlé également de l'importance de l'enseignement du français. Du côté francophone, on a nos écoles primaires et secondaires. On a nos deux collèges, La Cité et Boréal. La priorité numéro un de la communauté francophone, monsieur le Président, vous le savez, c'est la formation d'une université francophone pour et par tous les Franco-Ontariens, peu importe où ils demeurent dans la province. Ça, comme outil de recrutement francophone, comme outil d'insertion pour les nouveaux arrivants francophones : pensez à ce qu'on pourrait avoir. On aurait de vraiment bonnes raisons de célébrer la Semaine nationale de l'immigration francophone, parce qu'une université de l'Ontario franco, ça va aider les nouveaux arrivants à faire du français leur langue d'insertion, ça va aider les immigrants qui proviennent de pays francophones à faire de l'Ontario leur place de choix.

Bonne semaine à tous les Ontariens qui sont nouveaux arrivants, qui sont immigrants et qui ont fait du français leur langue d'insertion. On vous souhaite une semaine plaisante et de belles festivités.

Le Président (L'hon. Dave Levac): Merci beaucoup.

I thank all members for their statements.

PETITIONS

HYDRO RATES

Mr. Norm Miller: I have a petition with regard to electricity costs. It reads:

“To the Legislative Assembly of Ontario:

“Whereas electricity rates have risen by more than 300% since the current government took office; and

“Whereas over half of Ontarians’ power bills are regulatory and delivery charges and the global adjustment; and

“Whereas the global adjustment is a tangible measure of how much Ontario must overpay for unneeded wind and solar power, and the cost of offloading excess power to our neighbours at a loss; and

“Whereas the market rate for electricity, according to IESO data, has been less than three cents per kilowatt hour to date in 2016, yet the government’s lack of responsible science-based planning has not allowed these reductions to be passed on to Ontarians, resulting in electrical bills several times more than that amount; and

“Whereas the implementation of cap-and-trade will drive the cost of electricity even higher and deny Ontarians the option to choose affordable natural gas heating; and

“Whereas more and more Ontarians are being forced to cut down on essential expenses such as food and medicines in order to pay their increasingly unaffordable electricity bills; and

“Whereas the ill-conceived energy policies of this government that ignored the advice of independent experts and government agencies, such as the Ontario Energy Board (OEB) and the independent electrical system operator (IESO), and are not based on science have resulted in Ontarians’ electricity costs rising, despite lower natural gas costs and increased energy conservation in the province;

“We, the undersigned, petition the Legislative Assembly of Ontario as follows:

“To take immediate steps to reduce the total cost of electricity paid for by Ontarians, including costs associated with power consumed, the global adjustment, delivery charges, administrative charges, tax and any other charges added to Ontarians’ energy bills.”

I support this petition and sign it and give it to Kepler.

TUITION

Ms. Peggy Sattler: I’m proud to present a petition that was gathered by students from the Canadian Federation of Students. It was certified by the Clerk and is addressed to the Legislative Assembly of Ontario, with signatures from 40,000 students from colleges and universities across the province. The petition reads as follows:

“Whereas tuition fees have increased by up to 108% since 2003 and students in Ontario pay the highest fees in Canada; and

“Whereas students who take on public loans to afford college and university owe upwards of \$28,000 on average and in some cases pay 50% more for their education than a student who can pay out of pocket; and

“Whereas the current tuition fee framework has allowed tuition fees to increase for the last four years, with no significant increases in government funding; and

“Whereas 78% of Ontarians think tuition fees are too high and the majority of Ontarians support reductions in tuition fees as a means to help students afford college and university; and

“Whereas the introduction of the Ontario Student Grant serves as a major recognition that skyrocketing tuition fees and mortgage-sized debt loads have blocked far too many Ontarians from accessing a college or university education;

“Therefore we, the undersigned, support the Canadian Federation of Students-Ontario’s call and petition to the Legislative Assembly of Ontario to commit to:

“(1) reduce and eliminate tuition fees for all;

“(2) convert student loans into non-repayable grants;

“(3) remove interest from existing student loans.”

I’m happy to affix my signature to this, and will give it to page Nicolas to take to the table.

SCHOOL CLOSURES

Mr. Jim McDonell: I have a petition to the Legislative Assembly of Ontario.

“Whereas a staff report has recommended Upper Canada District School Board close numerous schools across eastern Ontario; and

“Whereas access to quality local education is essential for rural communities to thrive; and

“Whereas the Ministry of Education removed community impact considerations from pupil accommodation review guidelines in 2015 and has cut essential rural school funding; and

“Whereas local communities treasure their public schools and have been active participants in their continued operation, maintenance and success; and

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“Whereas the Ontario government should focus on delivering quality, local education services to all communities, including rural Ontario; and

“Whereas the current PAR process forces bad behaviour by school boards to justify the replacement of high-maintenance out-dated schools;

“We, the undersigned, petition the Legislative Assembly of Ontario as follows:

“(1) to support MPP Jim McDonell’s motion to suspend all current PAR reviews until strategic rural education plan is completed, engaging all rural school boards, school communities and municipalities;

“(2) to reinstate considerations of value to the local community and value to the local economy in pupil accommodation review guidelines; and

“(3) to engage all rural school boards, including the Upper Canada District School Board, school communities and municipalities in the development of the strategic rural education plan; and

“(4) consider rural education opportunities, school busing times, accessible extracurricular and inter-school

activities, the schools' role as a community hub and its value to the local economy."

I certainly agree with this and will be passing it off to page Emily.

CURRICULUM

Mr. Peter Tabuns: I'm pleased to present a petition put forward by Kairos.

"To the Legislative Assembly of Ontario:

"Whereas for six years the Truth and Reconciliation Commission of Canada (TRC) listened to thousands of former students of residential schools and their families testify to the devastating legacy of this national policy of assimilation;

"Whereas the TRC calls upon 'the federal, provincial and territorial governments, in consultation and collaboration with survivors, aboriginal peoples and educators, to make age-appropriate curriculum on residential schools, treaties and aboriginal peoples' historical and contemporary contributions to Canada a mandatory education requirement for kindergarten to grade 12 students' (CA 62.1); and

"Whereas on July 15, 2015, Canada's Premiers indicated their support for all 94 Truth and Reconciliation Commission calls to action and said they would act on them in their own provinces and territories;

"We, the undersigned, petition the Legislative Assembly of Ontario as follows:

"That the Legislative Assembly of Ontario urge the government of Ontario to fully implement such a curriculum for kindergarten through grade 12."

I agree with this petition. I affix my signature and I give it to page Yasmine for the table.

HYDRO RATES

Ms. Laurie Scott: "To the Legislative Assembly of Ontario:

"Whereas electricity rates have risen by more than 300% since the Liberal government took office; and

"Whereas over half of Ontarians' power bills are regulatory and delivery charges and the global adjustment; and

"Whereas many rural customers will see delivery charges soaring by as much as 25% in 2017, which will increase their total hydro bills by up to 11.5%; and

"Whereas more and more Ontarians are being forced into energy poverty, having to cut down on essential expenses such as food and medicines in order to pay their increasingly unaffordable electricity bills;

"We, the undersigned, petition the Legislative Assembly of Ontario as follows:

"To take immediate steps to reduce the total cost of electricity paid for by Ontarians, including costs associated with power consumed, the global adjustment, delivery charges, administrative charges, tax and any other charges added to Ontarians' energy bills."

This is signed by people from all over my riding, and these are from Lindsay and Bobcaygeon. I'm going to hand it to page Catherine.

PRIVATIZATION OF PUBLIC ASSETS

Miss Monique Taylor: I have a petition named "Hydro One Not for Sale!"

"Petition to the Legislative Assembly of Ontario:

"Whereas the provincial government is creating a privatization scheme that will lead to higher hydro rates, lower reliability, and hundreds of millions less for our schools, roads, and hospitals; and

"Whereas the privatization scheme will be particularly harmful to northern and First Nations communities; and

"Whereas the provincial government is creating this privatization scheme under a veil of secrecy that means Ontarians don't have a say on a change that will affect their lives dramatically; and

"Whereas it is not too late to cancel the scheme;

"Therefore we, the undersigned, petition the Legislative Assembly of Ontario as follows:

"That the province of Ontario immediately cancel its scheme to privatize Ontario's Hydro One."

I fully support this. I'm going to affix my name to it and give it to page Nicolas to bring to the table.

GOVERNMENT SERVICES

Mrs. Gila Martow: I borrowed this petition from the member who sits next to me to honour my father, Alex Gladstone, who is here today. You'll soon see why.

I have a petition to the Legislative Assembly of Ontario.

"Whereas Ontario drivers aged 80 and over must complete group education sessions, driver record reviews, vision tests and non-computerized in-class assessments in order to renew their licences; and

"Whereas in Cornwall and Stormont-Dundas-South Glengarry classes have been cancelled without notice due to staff shortages; and

"Whereas seniors are forced to drive needlessly and wait at offices for temporary licences, which is neither productive nor fair to clients; and

"Whereas seniors in Stormont-Dundas-South Glengarry who require a functional assessment must drive to Ottawa or Smiths Falls and complete driving tests in a stressful and unfamiliar environment; and

"Whereas it is the government's duty to serve Ontario residents locally and conveniently;

"We, the undersigned, petition the Legislative Assembly of Ontario as follows:

"(1) To deliver group education sessions and assessments on a walk-in basis at an existing facility such as the Cornwall DriveTest Centre; and

"(2) To take immediate steps to bring local delivery of functional assessment services to Cornwall and the united counties of Stormont, Dundas and Glengarry."

Of course I agree with this, and I'm giving it to page Doen.

AGRI-FOOD INDUSTRY

Mr. Rick Nicholls: "To the Legislative Assembly of Ontario:

"Whereas the Ontario government is proposing changes to regulation 440, by way of the Ontario Farm Products Marketing Commission (OFPMC), to replace the regulated marketing of 14 processing vegetable commodities in favour of a free-market system; and

"Whereas this removal of the negotiating authority of the Ontario Processing Vegetable Growers (OPVG) is a removal of the *raison d'être* of the OPVG in favour of an industry advisory committee; and

"Therefore we, the undersigned, petition the Legislative Assembly of Ontario as follows:

"That the Minister of Agriculture, Food and Rural Affairs and the government of Ontario support the Ontario Processing Vegetable Growers' right to negotiate price terms and conditions of contracts for processing vegetables in Ontario on producers' behalf."

I fully agree with this petition. I will sign it and give it to page Riya.

LYME DISEASE

Mr. Michael Mantha: "To the Legislative Assembly of Ontario:

"Whereas Ontario does not have a strategy on Lyme disease; and

"Whereas the Public Health Agency of Canada is developing an Action Plan on Lyme Disease; and

"Whereas Toronto Public Health says that transmission of the disease requires the tick to be attached for 24 hours, so early intervention and diagnosis is of primary importance; and

"Whereas a motion was introduced to the Legislative Assembly of Ontario encouraging the government to adopt a strategy on Lyme disease, while taking into account the impact the disease has upon individuals and families in Ontario;

"We, the undersigned, petition the government of Ontario to develop an integrated strategy on Lyme disease consistent with the action plan of the Public Health Agency of Canada, taking into account available treatments, accessibility issues and the efficacy of the currently available diagnostic mechanisms. In so doing, it should consult with representatives of the health care community and patients' groups within one year."

Two years later, I agree wholeheartedly with this petition. I present it to page Yasmine to bring it down to the Clerks' table.

PROPERTY TAXATION

Mrs. Cristina Martins: I have a petition here that's addressed to the Legislative Assembly of Ontario.

"Whereas the vacant unit rebate on property taxes is widely acknowledged as contributing to the high number of empty neighbourhood retail storefronts (i.e., residential/condominium above a commercial space) and reduced economic activity in our community; and

"Whereas the vacant unit rebate precludes short-term and flexible leases, which have been proven to revitalize neighbourhood commercial strips by providing a more accessible entry point and fostering entrepreneurship; and

"Whereas the vacant unit rebate is widely acknowledged as a contributor to the lack of interest or necessity among landlords in lowering commercial lease rates and/or improving commercial properties; and

"Whereas the city of Toronto, in the course of public hearings in 2015, formally requested the province of Ontario amend the vacant unit rebate provision 'for commercial and industrial properties, in order to enable the city to establish graduated vacant unit rebates that will induce and incent owners and tenants to meet eligibility criteria that align with the city's economic growth and job creation objectives'; and

"Whereas there are millions of dollars in property tax revenue being lost that could help alleviate problems of homelessness, food security and other local issues; and

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"Whereas the decision to amend or end the vacant unit rebate in our community ultimately requires the province of Ontario to amend the City of Toronto Act;

"We, the undersigned, petition the Legislative Assembly of Ontario as follows:

"That the province of Ontario amend the City of Toronto Act, granting the city of Toronto the power to delineate a specific category for neighbourhood retail commercial properties, and allowing them to set, amend and/or eliminate the vacant unit tax rebate for this category."

I agree with this petition. I'm going to affix my name and send it to the table with page Paige.

AUTOMOTIVE DEALERS

Mr. Michael Harris: I've got a petition here to the Legislative Assembly of Ontario.

"Whereas Bill 152, the Cutting Red Tape for Motor Vehicle Dealers Act, 2015 is a vital tool that supports Ontario's auto sector by cutting red tape for dealers and consumers when a vehicle is purchased or leased; and

"Whereas, in 2011, the province of Ontario conducted a pilot project on in-house vehicle licensing at two new car dealerships that was well received by the participants; and

"Whereas the province of Quebec has permitted automobile dealers to conduct in-house vehicle registrations since 2003, with 700 dealers currently participating;

"Therefore we, the undersigned, petition the Legislative Assembly of Ontario as follows:

"That the government of Ontario immediately pass" what was formerly known as "Bill 152 into law, to promote Ontario's auto retail sector by cutting red tape

for motor vehicle dealers and consumers to save them time and money."

I'm going to sign this and I will send it down with the page to the desk.

ORDERS OF THE DAY

AGGREGATE RESOURCES AND MINING MODERNIZATION ACT, 2016 LOI DE 2016 SUR LA MODERNISATION DES SECTEURS DES RESSOURCES EN AGRÉGATS ET DES MINES

Resuming the debate adjourned on November 1, 2016, on the motion for second reading of the following bill:

Bill 39, An Act to amend the Aggregate Resources Act and the Mining Act / Projet de loi 39, Loi modifiant la Loi sur les ressources en agrégats et la Loi sur les mines.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Paul Miller): I believe Mr. Mantha had the floor. The member from Algoma-Manitoulin.

Mr. Michael Mantha: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I would ask a favour: If anybody has a Halls or a cough drop in the House, I would really appreciate one, because I don't want to go into a coughing frenzy as I did yesterday.

I'm really happy to see the Minister of Northern Development and Mines here today, as the Minister of Natural Resources and Forestry was here yesterday for the first part. Actually, she was here for some of my comments that were made yesterday on the mining aspect of it.

Interjection.

Mr. Michael Mantha: Oh, you're such a sweetheart. Thank you very much. I'll take a couple more. I've got a little bit of time to go through.

It's unfortunate that a lot of my comments that were made on the mining amendments were done yesterday, but I will try to get back to those, since the minister is here today, and I know how enthusiastic he is about mining. We share a lot of common goals and vision when it comes to the mining industry. I think we see eye to eye on many of the issues and challenges that are there from the mining industry. We met together. We had a nice opportunity at the Meet the Miners event last week, where we both had a very good, in-depth briefing about the challenges that the industry faces. So I know that he knows what he has to do as far as the job and what the industry is looking for, but it never hurts to go over those issues again.

Within schedule number 2, as I alluded to in my last comments, a lot of the changes that the act is calling for are really modernizing changes. It establishes a process to carry over provisions for historic but current claims to be grandfathered into a new claims system, as well as settings out ministerial powers for abandoned, cancelled

or forfeited claims if the claim has not been reopened for mining claims registration. Mainly, what it also does is update the definition of a lot of parcels, claims, historical claims, legacy claims and the definition as far as how that is to be affecting the industry.

However: "The minister shall establish and maintain an electronic administration system, to be known as the mining lands administration system." Something that actually is welcome from industry is that, as I said yesterday, no longer will you be absolutely required to go out, physically grab your hammer along with your silver stakes and mark the claim. All that information will be available to you electronically.

There are some concerns: Is that a good thing? Is that a bad thing? Who will have access to this information? Some of those are contained within this bill. However, there are other questions that come out of this, and I think, through the process of the discussions we're going to have once we get the committee, some of that is going to be addressed.

What is missing within the Aggregate Resources and Mining Modernization Act is within both schedules. The one thing that is really missing is a clear process as far as what the steps are, what the procedures are, what the parameters are, what the framework is that we're going to need in order to engage a successful mining project or aggregates project and how that engagement is going to be reflected with consultation of First Nations. Again, there's nothing within this act that clearly states what that is going to look like, and that is a concern for both the mining sector and the aggregates sector.

So, having touched on those, a lot of my comments on Bill 39 are going to be on the aggregate resources side of it. Once again, the government is asking this Legislature to trust. This enabling legislation is vague and leaves almost all of the crucial details to regulation. The government has very little to show for over five long years of reviewing the Aggregate Resources Act. As I said yesterday and I'm saying again today, we're still waiting for those details because it is enabling legislation. A lot of people are hoping to see that in some of the regulations the government is going to come out with.

Within these, there aren't even any guidelines or statements of values for this policy framework. The government can do pretty much anything it wants. That's not good enough for industry stakeholders, environmentalists and the people of Ontario, who are asking for details as far as what's going to happen. This bill does not address or prevent another Melancthon mega quarry. It does not prevent destruction of wetlands by aggregate extraction and it does not protect the Niagara Escarpment.

This bill still does not adequately address the Environmental Commissioner's decade-old recommendations calling for a test to screen out pit or quarry applications from conflicts, and protection for natural heritage source water. The commissioner's office has reported 17 times on aggregate-related matters, and from their look as far as Bill 39, it suggests that with respect to natural heritage

value, this new legislation would not allow for upfront screening of key natural heritage areas to be set off limits for aggregate operation, which is a huge concern, something that they've been highlighting to this government for a very long time. The proposed legislation falls short of empowering the minister to screen out proposal conflicts with resource source water protection values as well—another concern that has been raised for a very long time.

Also, under a proposed amendment under (6) in the schedule of section 28 of the bill, it would empower the minister to create off-limits areas on crown land but not on private land. As most of the long-standing tensions between natural heritage protection and aggregate extraction take place over private lands in southern Ontario, the proposed legislation does not cite any reasons or criteria for the minister to consider creating off-limits areas. Presumably such reasons or criteria would be laid out in regulations once again.

Again, let's hope that a lot of what's in this blueprint shows up in the regulations, and the one consistent thing that I keep hearing from stakeholders and industry is that the blueprint contains a lot of those views as far as what people were asking for and what they were hoping to see

in this legislation. Unfortunately, it's not in the legislation and it's going to be left up to regulations, so everybody's kind of doing a "What's going to happen?"

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That is not how we're going to have development in this province. People need to know that certainty is going to be there. Industry needs to know that, if we're in a position to create new jobs, to provide the resources that are much needed across this province, we need to know that there is going to be a process as far as engagement. Once we complete the reports that are required, do the assessments that are required, follow the steps, do the analysis and do the consultation, this still leaves them in the position of, "All right, what do we do next?" It's not clear. That's what industry has been asking for. Quite frankly, First Nations have been asking as well, what is the process of engagement and whose responsibility is it? What exactly is government's responsibility?

I think they should be playing more of an active role in this process. What industry is feeling is that it's being pushed on to them: "You guys deal with it. These are the concerns that we have, and once you have those resolved and the First Nations are somewhat happy, then come and talk to us." Industry is somewhat frustrated with that because nobody is treated equally through this process. Some First Nations have different ways of handling, and you have to respect that process as well.

There should be a general consensus as far as what that engagement and consultation is going to look like. That's one of the biggest reasons why we harp about this once-in-a-lifetime development that we have in this province with the Ring of Fire. I know it's challenging and that it's not going to be easy. But we need to get to a point where we have respectful, meaningful consultation so that we can move the stakes forward.

Unfortunately, what has happened is that certain decisions were made and the parties were invited in afterward, which caused distrust and caused walls to be built. Now we have to break through those walls in a respectful manner that will not put up further barriers in this whole process. Again, there was an opportunity to show that engagement within these two schedules, but I can't find it. If they're there, I would ask both ministers to actually show me what that engagement is going to be like, because industry has been asking for that as well.

One thing I said in my comments yesterday that I wanted to bring up was in regard to—I just want to highlight section 6, and I may touch on it a little bit later in my comments.

"Section 6.1 of the act is amended by adding the following subsections:

"Trustee, reporting and removal

"(3.1) Despite any provision in the indenture agreement made between the minister and The Ontario Aggregate Resources Corporation, dated June 27, 1997, confirming the appointment of that corporation as the trustee of the trust and establishing the terms and condition of the trust,

"(a) The Ontario Aggregate Resources Corporation shall comply with such performance reporting requirements as may be prescribed; and

"(b) the minister may remove The Ontario Aggregate Resources Corporation as the trustee of the trust upon giving it at least 90 days' written notice."

It goes on:

"Resignation of trustee

"(3.2) For greater certainty, The Ontario Aggregate Resources Corporation continues, under the terms of the indenture agreement referred to in subsection (3.1), to have the right to resign as the trustee of the trust upon giving the minister written notice, the resignation to be effective 90 days after the written notice has been delivered to the minister or on an earlier date as may be agreed to in writing by the parties to the indenture agreement."

This begs the question, what is this amendment? What signal is being sent to TOARC? Actually, is the government signalling to TOARC that, "You know what? You might be removed as a trustee."

Does the government have other plans which we don't see yet in this legislation or through regulations? This is the question that some would ask. With this one designation, why shouldn't this be a public servant? Why shouldn't this money be collected by a public servant, adding more accountability and more transparency as to how these dollars are being spent through the province?

I just wanted to highlight that because it's a question that came up when I was reading through this bill, and it's definitely something that is going to need some clarification from this government, as to the direction they're going in by making this amendment in the act.

During the consultation, it was very clear that increasing the fees is supported, provided that the

following seven principles are met—and that's under the aggregates schedule:

(1) Licencing fees are charged on all products produced in Ontario;

(2) Money to regions and municipalities is used for infrastructure only;

(3) Exports out of province and imports into province are addressed;

(4) Discrepancies between the Mining Act and the Aggregate Resources Act are resolved;

(5) More funding for the Management of Abandoned Aggregate Property Program in TOARC is provided.

Again, I just raised the question about TOARC, so there's something underlying there that just raises a red flag with me; we're going to have to dig a little bit more into it. No pun intended, but we're going to have to dig into it.

(6) The increased fee results in increased enforcement, staffing and results from the Ontario government; and

(7) The fee is no longer directed to general revenues of the provincial government.

Indexing fees and royalties to the consumer price index was widely supported, with a recommendation of a one-year lag to accommodate provincial planning and pricing requirements.

This proposal was a really good step. However, I must express my disappointment in seeing that this bill has very little substance. This is almost entirely enabling legislation, with very few details. Most changes are left to regulations. There are more details in the government draft blueprint, which I alluded to earlier, than there are in the actual bill.

The blueprint proposals, like agricultural impact studies and maximum disturbed area provisions, are not even described in this bill. Again, these were brought up very, very loudly during the consultation process.

The blueprint proposed changes to modernize and strengthen the policy framework through legislation, regulations, standards and policies. Ultimately, it had four main goals:

(1) stronger oversight by introducing new tools, powers and provisions that improve effectiveness, efficiency and flexibility;

(2) environmental accountability by updating and enhancing application requirements, developing new tools to deal with existing sites, and improving record-keeping and reporting;

(3) improved information and participation by improving consistency in requirements, enhancing opportunities for involvement, and making information more accessible and easier to understand.

It's something I can relate to, dealing with a couple of quarries in my riding of Algoma-Manitoulin, where community members were overwhelmed with all the legwork that they had to do in order to access this information so that they could prepare their case, in order to have a meeting with the proponent who was looking to open up a quarry.

It's not that these people were opposed to it—not at all. They had some very legitimate concerns. It was difficult for them to bring in all of this information. Seeing that one of the suggestions would be to streamline this—it's something that people are asking for and have been asking for, for a very long time.

Another one was increased and equalized fees and royalties by changing crown land fees and royalties, indexing fees and royalties, working with municipal organizations to address infrastructure impact and creating provisions for the future. So I repeat, why aren't we seeing these recommendations inside this actual bill? It's frustrating to see that.

1620

There was a lot of work that went into the creation of this draft. When people saw this draft, they were quite encouraged and were looking forward to seeing the actual legislation, but it's not there. Again, we're simply left to hope that the government will appropriately use the powers we are giving them by passing this vague legislation.

The Melancthon mega-quarry had a major impact on requests to update the ARA, and everyone, including the industry and environmentalists, agreed. The scope of the project, which would have been developed on prime farmland, would have spanned 937 hectares. To put things into perspective, Mr. Speaker, that would have been about one third of downtown Toronto—that's a big hole—and created a crater one and a half times as deep as Niagara Falls.

Mr. Wayne Gates: Hold it.

Mr. Michael Mantha: That's a big hole, right? From the member from Niagara Falls, who is here, that's a big hole. This would have had serious, negative impacts on water and agriculture. It would have resulted in a loss of massive swaths of rich farmland, disrupted life for residents and affected the water table, threatening our drinking water and disrupting natural water flow at a rate of 600 million litres of water per day. This would have compromised the quality and quantity of drinking water, not only for local residents but for so many Ontario residents. We are privileged to have access to clean drinking water, a basic necessity of life. Let's ensure that we do not threaten it or take that for granted.

The big issue with this quarry was that an environmental assessment was not required. Many expressed outrage and concern and, with political pressure, the then Premier, Dalton McGuinty, was finally forced to mandate one for the mega quarry. This ultimately resulted in it being cancelled. We need a solution that will address what happened in the mega quarry in Melancthon and ensure that we do not see a repeat.

Recycling is something that we totally missed the boat on in this bill. We missed that one, Mr. Speaker, and I'm not sure why we missed it. I can give you a little bit of a perspective, maybe, why we missed it. The biggest user of aggregates in this province is the Ontario government. When you think about it, why wouldn't the government take the lead on recycling? They have that control of

doing that. Why wouldn't we be more environmentally friendly in regard to being responsible as to what comes out of our aggregates and how they are being used, and, once we have that material to be recycled, why wouldn't we look at the volumes and measure those volumes that come back in so we can appropriately mix it?

I am a little bit puzzled, and many are puzzled, as to why we didn't see more aggressive measures taken by this government in recycling. I think we can all agree on the need for greater use for recycling aggregates. That is with the exception of this government, who did not take the opportunity of including this opportunity in their bill.

The blueprint highlighted concerns for recycling and outlined measures which are not reflected in this bill. Again, a lot of great ideas in that blueprint which didn't get reflected in this bill. Seeing as how the government is the main buyer for aggregate, this leads us to believe that the exclusion of recycling in this bill is for government convenience. Is it fair that the government can exclude such important changes to legislation only to benefit their own interests?

The blueprint contained proposals for better record-keeping that would improve tracking and recycle aggregates and shed better light on where the province is doing well and where the province needs to do more and could improve. It stated that, "Every aggregate licensee and permittee must keep, for a period of seven years, detailed records on their operation. These detailed records include documentation of the quantity of material removed from the site, inventories of material on the site and information on sales and shipments. Changes are proposed to clarify these existing requirements for keeping detailed records about the operation and to ensure that these record-keeping requirements apply not only to material extracted from the site but also to imported aggregate materials (e.g. stone and sand brought in for blending and resale) and recycled aggregate materials (e.g. asphalt, concrete)."

The blueprint also discussed improving ability to use recycled materials: "As we improve our ability to use recycled aggregate material and as the specifications for aggregate materials continue to evolve, more aggregate material (imported from other sites) may be brought to pit and quarry sites for blending (i.e., mixing different aggregate materials together) and resale. To ensure the effectiveness of tonnage conditions, tonnage limits should apply to blended and recycled products."

Great idea, but it didn't go from here to here. That's the problem.

However, the bill is also silent on maximizing use of recycled aggregates such as allowing as-of-right deposits of recycled material at quarry sites, subject to quality standards, and only has provisions to enable record-keeping and tracking to recycle aggregates.

Maximizing the use of recycled aggregates would lead to fewer quarries, so why aren't we seeing this in this bill? Why aren't we taking advantage of an opportunity to do some recycling and not having to disturb or do further investigation as to more quarries, where we have

the available material that we can actually recycle and use? Why aren't we doing that, Mr. Speaker? Why didn't we see this? Maximizing the use of recycled aggregates would lead to fewer quarries.

Another weak point that we are seeing in this bill is that it offers no clear solution to growing communities that are suddenly surprised by the reappearance of long-dormant quarry permits near to what has become a residential area since the permit was originally approved, perhaps a decade earlier—again, an issue that is happening in my riding of Algoma-Manitoulin, an area where a quarry had not been started, but it had been slated for a quarry. Now, apparently, we are going to be dealing with a quarry. People have concerns. People have built their homes near these sites. A limited amount of individuals are being advertised. A limited amount of information is being required. People are having to get out of their comfort zones and ask questions—legal questions, expensive questions—as to, "How is this going to affect me?" Why wouldn't we be looking at opportunities where we can be using the aggregates that we already used, under the recycling mandate? But we're not.

This bill offers no clear solution for those seeking remedies for excessive noise, truck traffic or other impacts on aggregate operation. I have seen this first-hand in my riding, as I've just described to you, Mr. Speaker. It also doesn't add a clear solution to those seeking greater restrictions on large quarry operations in sensitive areas in the Niagara Escarpment—again, something that I alluded to a little bit earlier in my comments.

Rehabilitation is fine, but prime farmland and soil is not easily rehabilitated after aggregate extraction. This is key, Mr. Speaker, because not only are we dealing with homes and affecting lives, but we're also affecting our source of foods. This is going to be really key.

Restoring the same area—average soil capability and same range and productivity of specialty crops—and demonstrating successful restoration of similar croplands to original productivity elsewhere is not as easy as it sounds.

The Ontario Stone, Sand and Gravel Association's study of aggregate site rehabilitation in Ontario says, "On full rehabilitation, we find that only 3% of rehabilitated former aggregate sites in Ontario are used for agriculture. Most sites get 'rehabilitated' into playgrounds, fields, subdivisions and quarry lakes."

These are not proper substitutes for prime farmland, Mr. Speaker.

The report also says, "The study data indicated that many former aggregate extraction sites have natural current land uses but that the ecology of site rehabilitation is poorly documented," suggesting that no one can really say how restored these natural lands actually are.

1630

In my opinion, it would be good to seek out studies that examine whether it is even possible to rehabilitate an aggregate pit back into similar productivity of prime farmland. To what extent is the promise of rehabilitation

actually feasible is the question that I ask of both ministers.

Some may ask: What's so important about saving farmland? I know that my friend the member for Timiskaming—Cochrane and I have had many discussions about farmland and the importance of it, and good farm soil. I was at the Algoma Federation of Agriculture meeting just last weekend, and one of the main topics that we talked about was soil, talking about the importance of soil. Mind you, we were talking about the MPAC assessment and how they were looking at soil and how they were determining how the value of their MPAC assessment was based on the different levels of their soil, but it was a good discussion that we had. I always enjoy going to my farming communities because, I have to admit, it's one of my weak areas, when it comes to agriculture, which is why I rely a lot on my good friend the member from Timiskaming—Cochrane.

Of course, there is the obvious reason: Without local farms, there is no local food. Protection of the local food system promotes sound stewardship and preserves water and soil quality. Promoting farmland enhances the quality of life and communities both in rural and urban areas. Farmland is a significant contributor to environmental qualities that provide food and cover for wildlife, help control flooding, protect wetlands and watersheds, and maintain air quality. Farmland can absorb and filter waste water and provide groundwater recharge.

Viable agriculture helps protect and restore wild nature. Farmland is critical to protecting and promoting regional food systems programs and is a source of high-quality foods. It does this by contributing to a community's infrastructure and helping the local economy through sales, job creation and support services in business.

Environmental organizations have called for clear restrictions on quarry operations in environmentally sensitive areas, as well as clear protection for prime farmland, soil and drinking water. This bill lacks such clarity, although it enables such restrictions and protections. The preservation of the natural environment is essential for maintaining community sustainability.

Keeping all this in mind, it is important not to ignore the fact that this bill also has some strong points. We will be discussing those throughout, I hope, which will be a full opportunity to talk about this bill. As I said earlier this morning, the pattern of this government—they like to shut down debate on many of these.

I'm actually very happy that the member from Pembroke-Renfrew—Nipissing-Pembroke—

Hon. Steven Del Duca: Renfrew—Nipissing—Pembroke.

Mr. Michael Mantha: Thank you. Anyway, he always has this—the guillotine, when you guys bring it down and you shut down debate and shut out the views from other Ontarians in this whole study.

Unfortunately, I'm coming to an end and I'm going to have to wrap things up. I had a lot more to say on this bill. I will look forward to having the discussion with the

ministers at the committee stage. You can anticipate getting some amendments from us, particularly on recycling.

Also, I raise the red flag in regard to TOARC, wondering where the government is actually going with that one, because if there is a way to have more responsible, transparent and accountable monies, how they're being spent in this province, I would like to see that reflected in this bill. If this is a signal that this government is sending across the board, then great.

On a final, closing note, as the critic for northern development and mines, as I closed off at the Meet the Miners event, there are three main issues that we need to deal with when we're talking about modernizing the mining industry. Number one, we absolutely need to get those energy prices under control. We need to make sure that the energy programs that are there, such as NIER, are there for all in the industry so that none are competing indirectly with each other.

We need to make sure that we are promoting this industry a lot better than what we're doing and we need to make sure that the technology that is going to be there for the mines of the future—that we're investing in those in the very near future.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Paul Miller): Questions and comments?

Hon. Michael Gravelle: Thanks so much to the member for Algoma-Manitoulin for that fulsome discussion. I appreciated all the comments. I wish I could have been here yesterday when you were speaking more specifically to the mining modernization aspects of the legislation.

As you know, I was in Sudbury hosting a mining innovation summit, which was a great success, talking about the future of the mining sector, the development of really collaborative work in terms of innovation being the future. That's where I think it actually allows me to reference back to the fact that one of the things we know is going to be crucial is to set up a province-wide online mining claim registration system. It's one that sounds like, based on what you said, you do not disagree with indeed moving in this direction. If I had more time—hopefully during the afternoon I'll get another opportunity to perhaps offer some more comments.

It's fascinating to look at the fact that we went back to 2006 with the Mineral Development Strategy. Part of that Mineral Development Strategy in 2006 was to bring forward a modernized Mining Act, which we brought forward in 2009—Bill 173, in fact. I don't think the member was around, but it was a beginning of very much a phased approach into modernizing the Mining Act. That phased approach I think is very, very important.

Throughout this process, we have worked incredibly closely with the mineral sector, certainly with indigenous communities, with mining prospectors—the whole works. We've got a Minister's Mining Act Advisory Committee, which has been advising us all along the stages. We've gone through phase 1 and phase 2. Phase 1 focused largely on private landowners, including requiring notice of claim-staking and a mining land tax

exemption. Phase 2 implemented exploration plans and permits and clarified aboriginal consultation requirements. All these are important starts.

I'll look forward to my next opportunity to discuss the importance of moving to an electronic claim system.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Paul Miller): Questions and comments?

Mr. Rick Nicholls: It's a privilege again for me to stand and address Bill 39, An Act to amend the Aggregate Resources Act and the Mining Act. As a caucus we've discussed this bill, and our critic's recommendation is that we will support it, but we do believe that there are a number of amendments that need to take place before we can fully support this particular bill.

As an example, the government continues to boast about its infrastructure plan, but this means that we're going to actually be experiencing an increased need for aggregates over the next decade. In addition to that—people may not realize this, but this industry is actually worth \$1.5 billion in GDP to the province every single year, and it directly employs over 16,000 people here in the province. It's a great employer, for sure.

But in spite of the many positive benefits to local economies, pits and quarries—this is a concern that we have—often encounter stiff opposition when they file for expansions and new projects, so we feel that aggregate reforms have to be increased. They need to increase their own transparency and build the relationship between proponents and their communities. It's unfortunate that that has to happen.

One other last thing that I'd like to mention is that when we talk about consultation, we've noticed that this government says they consult, but we question: to whom and to how many? I'll just quote this, since I have very little time left. It states that the minister will consider whether adequate consultation has been carried out before making decisions regarding licences and permits. What we say is: What constitutes adequate consultation?

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Paul Miller): Questions and comments?

Ms. Jennifer K. French: I'm glad to be able to weigh in and add some remarks to the very thoughtful remarks from our critic for northern development and mines, the fine member from Algoma-Manitoulin, on Bill 39, the Aggregate Resources and Mining Modernization Act.

As he pointed out, this is a piece of enabling legislation, where most of the meat of it is going to be left to regulations and so much is not described in the bill, despite the fact that during the consultation process—and I'm not specific on the recommendations that came forward; he so eloquently put them forward. But why aren't those recommendations seen in this piece of legislation?

1640

Speaker, I don't have a background in mining or a familiarity with the aggregate industry, but I realized in listening to his remarks that you could be talking about any number of industries when we're looking at debating this legislation. As he said, the energy crisis needs to be under control. That's a concern of any industry in

Ontario right now. Promoting this industry and ensuring the technology and supports are in place for the mines of the future—but we could be talking about manufacturing as well. I think when we talk about the lack of fulsome consultation or leaving everything to regulation or the amendments we're going to bring forward at committee, we could be talking about anything, because we keep hearing the same thing over and over when it comes to this government.

Back to specifics with this bill: During committee, we'd like to see greater clarity to strengthen a lot of the environmental pieces when it comes to greater use of recycled aggregates. I thought it was very interesting to have the member remind us that the biggest user of aggregates in this province is the government of Ontario. So for them to leave out recycling—hmm.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Paul Miller): Questions and comments?

Hon. Kathryn McGarry: It's always a pleasure to rise on behalf of my constituents in Cambridge and North Dumfries township, in particular today to speak to Bill 39, which is a bill that I'm sharing with the Minister of Northern Development and Mines.

I thank the member from Algoma-Manitoulin for his thoughtful comments today. I know that my ministry offered himself and the opposition a technical briefing, which he has taken advantage of.

As the member has said, Bill 39 is an enabling piece of legislation and, if passed, will allow the government the opportunity to consult further on regulations. So it's a two-phase process: This will provide the framework for the future and the regulatory process will also allow more consultation. Leading up to this proposed bill, we've had a lot of consultation coming around A Blueprint for Change and other pieces.

I wanted to address two things. One is the opportunity for recycled aggregates. Certainly it's a discussion that my ministry is continuing to work on. The ability to recycle and reuse a non-renewable resource is critical to sustainable management. Recycled aggregates are not the right fit for every use, so that will continue to need further work. We also want to make sure that we're appropriately identifying the impacts of transportation, storage and processing of recycled aggregate materials.

Secondly, on fees and royalties, we have consulted broadly on this particular issue. We hired a consultant to be able to work with our stakeholders, our municipalities, our ministry and other folks to come up with a balance of fees and royalties that are paid out to different jurisdictions. We'll continue work on that, digest what we've got there and continue our work on that.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Paul Miller): The member from Algoma-Manitoulin has two minutes.

Mr. Michael Mantha: I want to thank the Minister of Northern Development and Mines, the Minister of Natural Resources and Forestry, the member from Chatham-Kent-Essex and the member from Oshawa for their very kind comments. I say "kind comments," because in this

House we always try to conduct ourselves with some honour, and we always take care of ourselves in here.

I just wanted to say that I made a comment, when I opened today, that I was in a coughing frenzy yesterday and I was hoping somebody could bring me a Halls. I want to thank that page for bringing me one, but look at what I got while I've been doing my speech. I got two packs of Halls from Paula, who takes care of those kids. She's such a doll and so kind. You know what? When you treat others with kindness, you always get it back 10 times over. I just wanted to thank her very much for bringing me the Halls. They're going to be very useful.

I want to touch on the comment that the Minister of Natural Resources and Forestry brought up. It's one that I harped on during a lot of my comments. It's the need for looking at recycling in greater depth. I understand what she's saying. We've had many discussions about this. We've been talking about this for a long time. Trust me, when I stepped up to help the member from Timmins–James Bay, who is absent at the moment, and looked at helping out on this portfolio, I really didn't know very much about gravel. But when you dig into it and you actually look at it, it's quite interesting because of all the different facets and all the different industries that are affected by this. It's really interesting when you really get into the details and into the dirt of what this issue is.

But when you say that this isn't the right fit, that's an easy excuse for the government to step away from actually using recycling, and you're really not challenging yourself and promoting a new—

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Paul Miller): Thank you.

The last five speakers went over their two minutes, and I even gave them leverage of five to 10 seconds more, and they went even further. When your two minutes are done—you should be watching the clock—you're done. I've been more than fair. So from now on, I'm going to cut you off at two minutes.

ROYAL ASSENT SANCTION ROYALE

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Paul Miller): I beg to inform the House that in the name of Her Majesty the Queen, the Administrator is pleased to assent to certain bills in his office.

The Clerk-at-the-Table (Ms. Tonia Grannum): The following are the titles of the bills to which His Honour did assent:

An Act in respect of the cost of electricity / Loi concernant le coût de l'électricité.

An Act to proclaim the month of October Islamic Heritage Month / Loi proclamant le mois d'octobre Mois du patrimoine musulman.

An Act to proclaim Remembrance Week and to provide for the observance of Remembrance Day / Loi proclamant la semaine du Souvenir et prévoyant l'observation du jour du Souvenir.

AGGREGATE RESOURCES AND MINING MODERNIZATION ACT, 2016

LOI DE 2016 SUR LA MODERNISATION DES SECTEURS DES RESSOURCES EN AGRÉGATS ET DES MINES

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Paul Miller): Further debate.

Hon. Kevin Daniel Flynn: It's a pleasure to join the debate, and I wanted to let you know that I'll be sharing my time this afternoon with the Minister of Transportation and the Minister of Tourism, Culture and Sport.

It is a pleasure to join the debate, as I said, on Bill 39, the Aggregate Resources and Mining Modernization Act. As you would imagine, coming from a community like Oakville in the region of Halton, I'd be a lot more familiar with the aggregate part of this bill than I would with the mining. But since becoming the Minister of Labour, I've gone out of my way, on every opportunity I have, to visit northern Ontario and to learn a lot more about the mining industry.

I have to say, I'm very, very impressed. I have to say, as a person from southern Ontario, where I make my home, I've got a much deeper and a greater understanding of the impact that mining has on the economy of our great province but, in particular, the impact that it has on northern Ontario, and the potential. But I'm equally impressed not just by the mines themselves and the infrastructure that goes along with them, but by the people that are involved: the people that are in the business, the people that are running the companies, the steelworkers, organized labour, the men and women that go down into the mines each and every day.

Certainly, I've been looking at it through a health and safety perspective. For a while there, there was a feeling that perhaps we weren't doing as well as we should when it came to health and safety in our mines. That's what really enabled me to get to know the mining industry a little more than I did before, and now I understand it. As a result of some great partnerships between organized labour, between health and safety organizations, advocates, some of the family members, unfortunately, of people that have been hurt in the mines and, even worse, people that have been killed in the mines as a result of accidents—everybody in northern Ontario seems to be pulling together when it comes to the health and safety of our mining industry, and some great strides have been made in that regard.

Speaker, politically where I've been involved is from the aggregate perspective of this bill. I come from the region of Halton. We have a number of pits and quarries within the region of Halton, and to be blunt, we've had some very, very good, responsible companies in there, and we've had some companies that could have done a lot better and could have handled the issue a lot better. From time to time, what happened was, the rules allowed them to operate in a certain way, and we found out in the passage of time that the way they'd been operating wasn't in the best interests of our environment.

1650

Speaker, we're a growth community. The region of Halton, the town of Oakville, the town of Milton, the city of Burlington, Georgetown, Halton Hills—all growing communities. We've got subdivisions opening up on a regular basis. We've got some pretty significant increases in the population of those communities.

Each and every one of them is built on a foundation. They've got driveways at the front. They've got all of those things that we insist upon when we buy a house. But it means that we need to have the aggregate, the gravel, the sand. Whatever it takes, whatever the building material is, we need to have that there in order for these homes to be built, in order to have places where people are going to raise families.

Sometimes the knee-jerk reaction is, "We don't like quarries; we don't like pits." We realize that there is actually a demand. Each and every one of us places that demand. Then I think what you move to is that you want to see it done right.

You want to make sure that the way that we mine aggregates or the way that we mine up in northern Ontario for the minerals and the other ores that we get out of the mines is done as well as possible. The regulatory framework that we put around those industries is one that needs to help companies, but it needs to help communities as well. It needs to allow the industry to continue to provide that resource, but in a way that doesn't impact, perhaps, on the communities or on the natural ecosystem in the way that it has in the past.

Bill 39 is designed to strengthen the oversight and the management of aggregate operations. Some of the most beautiful places in the region of Halton, when you get up into the Halton conservation area, up around the Rattlesnake Point area and areas like that, are actually former quarries that have been rehabbed and put back into public lands and opened up for the public to access. They are beautiful places that people like to visit. When they're out with their families and they want a little bit of the outdoors and a little bit of wilderness, they will go and visit some of the former quarry sites.

We obviously need to make sure that the management of those sites into the future is something that allows us to take the resource now but also allows future generations to go and use that land again. That wasn't always the way. In the past, some quarries were allowed to operate which had a very negative effect on the region of Halton, where I live.

To give some credit to the folks at the region of Halton and the aggregate management of that resource, the region of Halton has one of the best ways of allowing the industry and the business to operate, but to operate in a very responsible way.

We need to enhance that environmental protection, and that's where I know that Regional Chair Carr and the other members of regional council will take this tool that's contained in Bill 39 and will use it to its fullest extent. It's going to improve the information that the public gets. It's going to improve the access that people

have to information that I think is really important to make the right decision. The public likes to be involved in these types of deliberations because they do actually change the fabric of their community.

When you look at things like drinking water and you look at things like groundwater, you know that the way you manage these operations can have a tremendous effect on a community that relies on drinking water from wells, for example. A lot of the region of Halton now is on a lake-based system, but there are still quite a few that operate on wells and still have a well-based system. They need to make sure that whatever is done in the aggregate industry is done in a way that doesn't interrupt or interfere with the drinking water supply for the people who are still living like that and are still dependent upon wells.

All in all, I think what you're seeing, Speaker, is a very balanced approach to managing the aggregate resources we have in the province of Ontario. I think that there are always extremes to a bill, but in this case, I think that the balance is evident. In my opinion, the rest of the House should be supporting this.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Rick Nicholls): I recognize the Minister of Transportation.

Hon. Steven Del Duca: I'm very happy to have the chance to be here this afternoon in the Legislature and add my voice to the debate that's ongoing with respect to Bill 39, the Aggregate Resources and Mining Modernization Act. We've now obviously had the chance to hear from a number of members from both sides of the House about this particular legislation. I'm always glad to have the chance to follow fast on the heels of the Minister of Labour, the MPP from Oakville, who just spoke very eloquently about his experience at a local or regional level in the Halton area and what's been taking place in the aggregate sector.

Speaker, I would also point out that, to my understanding, this is actually the first piece of legislation that's being put forward jointly from two ministries and the first piece of legislation that the—relatively speaking—new Minister of Natural Resources and Forestry, the member for Cambridge, is putting forward. I just want to say that that minister is someone I've known for quite some time. I know how excited she is about this legislation—for good reason, which I'll get to in a second—but I also want to say to her, congratulations on moving forward with this legislation, being her first, and a fantastic job.

Because it is both aggregate resources and mining modernization, the Minister of Northern Development and Mines is someone for whom this is not the first piece of legislation he's been involved with, because he is someone, of course, who brings extraordinary breadth and depth of experience with respect to the mining industry, northern Ontario; and more than just that, he is a great friend and colleague. Congratulations to both of my colleagues on this particular bill.

It was mentioned earlier today, and in some of the notes that I'm sure many of us have, about the import-

ance of the aggregate industry, generally speaking. I believe it was a member from the NDP caucus who said, just a few minutes ago, that perhaps the largest—if not the largest, certainly one of the largest—customers of aggregate would be the government of Ontario. I will say, as the Minister of Transportation, that we literally could not do the work that's required to make sure that our infrastructure is built, built out, kept in a state of good repair, if it weren't for the aggregate sector, whether we're talking about roads, highways or bridges, the transit projects that we're currently involved in. Making sure that we have a functioning and effective aggregate sector is absolutely critical. I think most members would understand that. I certainly have had the chance over the last couple of years to hear directly from members on all sides, representing all corners of Ontario, about the importance of making sure that we continue to invest in those roads and those bridges and public transit.

But, Speaker, it goes beyond that. When you look at the rest of the infrastructure we have in the province—health care infrastructure, educational infrastructure, all of those pieces—the entire construction or infrastructure industry that exists in the province of Ontario is, at its foundation, reliant upon a flourishing aggregate resources sector. So when you look at this legislation—and I'm going to focus with my remaining time on the piece that relates mostly to the aggregates. I don't want to do a disservice to what's taking place in our mining industry in the province of Ontario. It is doing well. It is flourishing. Others will have the opportunity to reference that in some of the debate. But I know, as the Minister of Labour referenced, making sure that we are moving forward and providing what I'll call that enabling opportunity as it relates to the aggregate sector is something that is important.

I know this has been mentioned already in the course of debate, but for example, if passed, Bill 39 would strengthen oversight and management of aggregate operations. It would increase and equalize fees and royalties, it would enhance environmental protection for aggregate sites, and it would improve information and participation in the application process.

Now, everyone here will know that I'm extremely fond of discussing transportation infrastructure specifically. I think that's understandable. But just a few days ago, I was delighted to be in my community of Vaughan. I was there on behalf of the Premier. The MPP from Ottawa South, the parliamentary assistant to the Minister of Health and Long-Term Care, was there with me. We announced the official groundbreaking of the new Vaughan hospital, what's known as the Mackenzie Vaughan Hospital. This is ultimately what I'll call a construction or infrastructure project that will be more than a million square feet. When I think of how critical it is for the aggregate sector to be functioning properly, to be effective and to flourish in this province, I can't even begin to imagine, for example, how much concrete will go into a project like a one-million-square-foot-plus hospital in my community. That's just a really great example.

Most of the people that we're proud to represent wouldn't necessarily realize that all of the outcomes that are critical, especially all of the physical outcomes that are critical to their daily lives—making sure that they have a quality of life that's good for them, for their kids, for their neighbours, and also making sure that we have a strong and thriving economy—most wouldn't realize that legislation like Bill 39, which will help the aggregate sector continue to be effective and continue to flourish, how critical legislation like this is to enabling those positive outcomes for them, for their neighbours and for the rest of the people who are living in their respective communities.

1700

Certainly, lots of great questions have been raised by members of both opposition parties on this particular legislation. I know the debate will continue, but I think Bill 39—thanks largely to the work that's been done by both the Minister of Natural Resources and Forestry and the Minister of Northern Development and Mines—is legislation that deserves support, and I look forward to hearing from other members in the course of this discussion.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Rick Nicholls): Continuing along, I recognize the Minister of Culture, Tourism and Sport.

Hon. Eleanor McMahon: It's very exciting to have this opportunity, and I say that not only because I'm following my two able colleagues the Minister of Transportation and the Minister of Labour—the Minister of Labour, of course, being my neighbour in Halton; I'm going to talk about Halton in a moment—but also because I was parliamentary assistant to the Minister of Natural Resources and Forestry prior to being appointed to cabinet. In that capacity, I had the opportunity to meet with several organizations and municipalities representing the aggregate-producing municipalities, including my own of Burlington, of course, which, as the Minister of Labour noted, is part of robust Halton region, and Milton, the fastest-growing city in Canada. He talked a little bit about the context in which we find ourselves as a growing province and a growing economy.

If I may, Speaker, the fact is that we are building Ontario up on this side of the House, and the need for aggregate is incredibly important. TAPMO, the Top Aggregate Producing Municipalities of Ontario—I'll talk more about them in a moment—estimates that the need for gravel is going to surpass over four billion tonnes over the next 20 or so years. Right in my community of Burlington and the Minister of Labour's community of Oakville—they just got a new hospital in Oakville and we're getting a brand new one in Burlington. You can imagine the amount of material that's required to build this infrastructure. It's significant.

I'm pleased that our government has taken some leadership on this bill. I know it's been a long time coming, which is one of the reasons I'm so pleased to talk about it. I understand that it's been seven years in the making, and that's been important. Why? Because we've

taken a considerable amount of time to consult. We've had a standing committee—all sides of the House. We had a report that was produced, and we had a number of very robust recommendations.

I just want to speak a little bit about that, Speaker, and how we're responding to those recommendations. The process of consultation, of course, was significant, and I want to speak about that now, if I may.

Again, referencing the Top Aggregate Producing Municipalities of Ontario, which comprises municipalities that make up about 65% of the aggregate producers—so the majority, for sure—I want to give a shout-out to my friend Marolyn Morrison, the former mayor of Caledon, who really started TAPMO along with a number of her colleague mayors. I certainly heard from them when I was at AMO in my capacity as a parliamentary assistant. They talked a great deal about some of the things that I'm happy to say are being addressed in this legislation.

One of the things they talked about was fair compensation. This bill will support updated and equalized fees and royalties by setting the framework for equalizing fees between crown land and private land. TAPMO really underscored that as an important element.

Levelling the playing field is something else they talked about, and I see that the legislation is addressing that and a couple of other things that they talked about.

They talked about robust enforcement. The proposed changes to oversight of aggregate operations and environmental protection in this bill are very sound indeed. When you think of oversight, you can talk about things like proposing to broaden the ministry's ability to require information related to aggregate operations; enhanced fines and increased penalties, with fines up to a maximum of \$1 million, plus \$100,000 for each day an offence continues; and clearer offence provisions for false reporting.

We're also proposing a custom planning approach for unique applications, such as those in the bed of a lake or a river or a mega-quarry, which may require significant additional and robust studies and community engagement.

Then, finally, we're proposing changes that would require new applications to identify a cap on the amount of area that could be disturbed at any one time, as well as performance indicators for rehabilitation monitoring and reporting.

Those are incredibly important issues that need to be addressed, and this legislation is addressing them. Why, Speaker? Because as TAPMO requested, and as others that I've spoken to during my time here have asked us to do, they've asked us to look at balancing the economic benefits to municipalities with environmental sustainability. Rehabilitation of many of these pits is also critically important, because on many occasions, once the extraction has happened, those pits are rehabilitated and then communities can enjoy them in a much different way afterwards. Of course, the legislation is looking to address that as well.

All in all, it's a balanced approach to an incredibly important piece of legislation that is going to enable us to build the \$160 million in infrastructure over the next dozen or so years that we're looking at building.

Of course, building Ontario up and the need for aggregate, if I may say, Speaker, is a sign of a robust economy. We're in the midst of this tremendous injection of infrastructure and funding across our province, with highways, schools and hospitals, as I mentioned, being built at a record rate. I see our federal government has now engaged in a conversation that would see them do the same. And why, Speaker? Because we know that that not only attracts jobs and investment to our economy—critically important—but it enhances the quality of life of our citizens. I'm seeing that right in my own community of Burlington.

Not only is that incredibly important, but it really is one of the reasons why Ontario is leading North America in foreign direct investment. Economies around the world and companies around the world are coming to Ontario. They want to invest in Ontario because we are investing in infrastructure. Confident economies invest in themselves. That's exactly what we're doing on this side of the House.

This bill is incredibly important. I'm looking forward to seeing it pass. I did sit on committee when we looked at other issues related to the bill. It was a very interesting conversation then. I know it will continue. I'm delighted to have had this opportunity today to participate. I look forward to seeing this bill pass very soon.

Thank you very much for your time.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Rick Nicholls): Questions and comments?

Mr. Victor Fedeli: I appreciate the opportunity to speak to the Act to amend the Aggregate Resources Act and the Mining Act. I want to talk about something that brings the two of them together, and that is the Ring of Fire. It is a mining find in Ontario's Far North.

I did attend the aggregate hearings that were held throughout Ontario. I can tell you—that was a couple of years ago now—that at the hearing in Sudbury, we heard from one of the Ministry of Natural Resources' staff, who was presenting the need for aggregate in the Ring of Fire. At that time, he talked about the massive quantity of aggregate that would be needed for either a road or a rail line to the Ring of Fire from Nakina. That was the plan at the time. Speaker, it's an inordinate amount of aggregate that we are going to have to draw from all parts of Ontario.

I would make a comment that we would be looking for transparency in this process. I know that pits and quarries do encounter stiff opposition from time to time, when they file for expansions and new projects. So we need to know that these aggregate reforms need to increase transparency and build relationships between the proponents and their communities, because, quite frankly, we are going to need, for this one project alone—the road or rail line to the Ring of Fire—a huge amount of aggregate.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Rick Nicholls): Further questions and comments?

Ms. Jennifer K. French: I'm glad again to add my two cents and my two minutes on Bill 39, the Aggregate Resources and Mining Modernization Act, and add a few thoughts to those shared by members of the government.

I'd like to first say that I appreciate what the Minister of Labour had added to the conversation about health and safety and the importance that needs to be placed on health and safety initiatives as we find the opportunity. Certainly, with the history of mining, not just in the province but around the world, there have been so many opportunities to improve health and safety.

1710

I had the opportunity with my own private member's bill, you may recall, the Protecting Victims of Occupational Disease Act, to have some conversations with the minister and to move forward with a piece of legislation that addressed some of those issues.

I will stand here and frankly say that I don't have a background in mining. I'm hearing about quarries and pits, and I'm doing my best to have an understanding of how it all fits. But I will say that in Oshawa, we have an international deep water shipping port. We see really neat stuff coming in off of the international ships, but we are also connected to cross-Canada rail. We have a rail spur there, and the shipping industry, the rail, the 401 and our roadways are all in the same neighbourhood as environmentally sensitive areas—the wetlands. When you have industry come together in an area like that, you need to have clear solutions. You need to have clarity about how to be good quarry neighbours or good industry neighbours, and all of those pieces.

I will talk about this again.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Rick Nicholls): Further questions and comments.

Hon. Michael Gravelle: It's great to have another opportunity to make a few comments related to this important legislation, Bill 39, An Act to amend the Aggregate Resources Act and the Mining Act. I want to thank the Minister of Labour, the Minister of Transportation and the Minister of Tourism, Culture and Sport for their thoughtful comments, as well as those of my colleagues.

When I first spoke a short time ago, I spoke about the phasing in of the modernized Mining Act, which was phase 1, phase 2 and now we are moved to phase 3, and this is really the important stage. We are committed and determined to become the global leader in sustainable mineral development. We believe that moving to this online claim registration system will be one of the keys to us being able to move forward in a very positive way.

The phase 3 will be introduced in two stages, and I think that's important to understand because we want to make sure that we do get this right. The first stage would be the rollout of the initial components of the new mining lands administration system. In that first stage, clients would be able to perform certain transactions online like obtaining or renewing their prospector licences and

completing the Mining Act Awareness Program, which was part of phase 2.

The second stage really is an important one because in this stage we would cover the remaining deliverables. It would roll out shortly after the completion of the first stage.

In the final stage, prospectors would be able to search the status of mining lands in Ontario, register their claims online and transfer them without government assistance. I think the big thing here, and what is the real difference from the paper- and ground-staking process—I'd love to have an opportunity at some point later today to explain to people just how that system really worked. In other words, clients would be able to conduct business 24 hours a day, seven days a week, 365 days a year. We know this is going to be a very big improvement to the mining claims system.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Rick Nicholls): Further questions and comments.

Mr. Todd Smith: It's a pleasure to join the debate here this afternoon on Bill 39. I had an hour leadoff on this bill. I spoke entirely on the aggregate portion of the act that's changing. I look forward to hearing the 20 minutes from our critic for northern development and mines when he addresses the mining portion of this bill as well.

Of course, I enjoyed the commentary by the three ministers who just spoke. It sounds like a joke, actually—three ministers walk into a bar. Anyway, the three ministers who spoke about this bill here this afternoon spoke mostly at the 30,000-foot level, about all the good things that this bill is going to do. And that's fine; there are a lot of good things in this bill.

Unfortunately, what's lacking in this bill is detail. What's lacking in the bill is actual legislation, and I think what's going to happen with a lot of the good stuff that they're talking about is that it's going to be decided in the regulatory process.

The legislation is really not that clear and not that well defined. A lot of the language in the bill, when it comes to peer reviews or when it comes to consultation—especially with our indigenous communities—is not very well defined. I think those who are in the industry and those who are concerned in the communities about the spread of the industry or quarries and pits in their hometowns are concerned about the lack of detail in the legislation as well.

The Minister of Transportation spoke at length about a number of projects that are included in their infrastructure goals that they've set. I'm not sure if they're stretch goals or not, but they are goals and targets that the government has set. When it comes to new infrastructure, a lot of aggregate is going to be needed. Unfortunately, the industry is bound up in red tape right now. Pits and quarries are supposed to take three years to be approved; in a lot of cases, they're taking 10. So there's a lot of language that needs to be tightened up.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Rick Nicholls): Back to the Minister of Labour for final comments.

Hon. Kevin Daniel Flynn: Thank you, Speaker, for allowing me to wrap up on this, and thanks to everybody who has spoken to this: Minister Gravelle, Minister McGarry, Minister McMahon, Minister Del Duca, the member from Nipissing, the member from Oshawa and, finally, the member from Prince Edward–Hastings. In particular, thanks to the member from Oshawa for pointing out that there certainly is a health and safety aspect to the mining industry. Certainly, Ontario mines are amongst the safest in the world, but we should never rest on our laurels.

When I started off, I said that, representing a riding in southern Ontario, you don't always know an awful lot about the mining industry because most of the mines—outside of the salt mines, I think—are in the northern part of this province. But I have paid a little bit of attention to it.

I just celebrated my 40th wedding anniversary, and there's a story behind this, because—

Applause.

Hon. Kevin Daniel Flynn: That should all be for my wife, Speaker.

But apparently, at some point, I said that I would really like an Ontario diamond. Now, I don't recall saying that, so I may have said it in my sleep, but at some point my wife heard me say, "I'm hearing good things about Ontario diamonds. I wouldn't mind one."

When you have your 40th anniversary, you surprise yourself—you surprise each other. Actually, you surprise yourself when you have a 40th anniversary. What I did is get her a nice pair of ruby earrings—it's a 40th anniversary. I have no idea where the rubies came from, but she went out and specifically got me an Ontario diamond. You're not supposed to use a prop, I know. But at some point, I said that I wanted an Ontario diamond. As I said, I may have said it in my sleep, but I got the diamond anyway. So now I'm thinking about saying in my sleep, "I would like a Harley Davidson," because apparently if you just say it, you get it.

The reputation that Ontario mines are starting to garner around the world—that's a long way of saying that what the member for Nipissing was saying is that the province of Ontario has a tremendous future when it comes to mining. Bill 39 goes a long way towards ensuring we take care of it.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Rick Nicholls): Thank you. I appreciate the fact, Minister, that props are not allowed, but I must admit that the Ontario diamond was blinding.

Further debate?

Mr. Norm Miller: It's my pleasure to have the opportunity this afternoon, as the northern development and mines critic, to speak to Bill 39, An Act to amend the Aggregate Resources Act and the Mining Act. I will be speaking mainly to the mining portions of this bill.

Last week, I had the opportunity to welcome miners to Queen's Park in the annual Meet the Miners Day and reception here at Queen's Park. Certainly, I and many members of our party are huge supporters of mining. It's

an industry that employs 256,000 people in Ontario. It's \$10.8 billion a year. It's one of the safest industries there is. It's done in an environmentally sustainable way. It's the biggest indigenous employer in the province. I've seen differing numbers; I've seen as high as 9% to 14%. So it's an industry that very much supports our indigenous communities, particularly in the Far North.

No matter what you do nowadays, you're going to need products from mining, whether you're using your computer that has a lithium battery or perhaps you're wanting to get an electric car—so many devices rely on mining.

This bill deals mainly with changing the way we deal with the process of staking claims. In the past, it has been a very hands-on approach, where you would actually physically go out on the land and stake a claim. A long, long time ago, I had some friends that were prospectors in their youth. My good friends John Moses and Jan Wescott—who is now with Spirits Canada—at one point were in the prospecting business. John was a friend of mine, so he actually asked me if I could assist him to stake some claims back in 1980. This was April of 1980. So I dutifully got my prospector's licence. The way it worked was, if claims lapsed, then they could be restaked by someone. You have to do a certain amount of work.

1720

On April 1, 1980, I was somewhere north of Sudbury; I'd be hard-pressed to find where the location was now. The claims come free at 6 a.m. in the morning. I had snowshoes, a compass, an axe, some brass plates and a magic marker. The way it works is, you actually go out on the land. The claims are one-quarter-mile square. The northeast corner is—I don't know what the terminology was, but on that point of the claim you have to cut down a tree, square it off, nail your brass plaque on with your prospector's number on it, write on the time of day, and sign it.

So on April 1, 1980, I went out in the bush and staked 6 claims, starting at 6:01. My friends got this group of, I think it was, 36 claims which had come open on that day. That's the way prospecting has been done. If a prospector thinks there's a ore body, a mineralization that's economic, then they would go out on the ground and stake claims.

This bill changes that to a system that doesn't require people to physically go out on the ground. It would change to a system whereby someone sitting in an office can do it electronically. Map selection, I believe, is what it is called, so it is a big change.

I did speak with the Ontario Prospectors Association, with Garry Clark from that organization. He said that some, especially the smaller members, are not in favour. In general, most of their members are either in favour or resigned to the fact that this is the way the world is going.

The system does provide for greater accuracy. You know, out in the bush with a compass, I probably wasn't all that precise. I remember that my snowshoe broke on the way back, so I was hobbling back on just one snowshoe. With GPS, and doing it basically based on GPS, it's much, much more accurate.

For the prospectors that rely on that for their livelihood, of course they are quite concerned. In theory, what should happen is that the money saved on having a stake—to physically go on the ground and stake a claim—will be invested in exploration. So those same people that were staking the claims will hopefully get jobs walking the ground to try to find the claims—by actually walking the ground, because lots of mines have been found by prospectors when they are out doing their assessment work.

I know that one of the concerns with this bill is how the new system of cells will take in the traditional claims, the legacy claims, and address them, and what it will mean for the required assessment work that will need to be done. There is concern about how that is done—a lot of devil in the details, I guess, on just how it's done.

I would also raise concerns that the government doesn't have a great track record with doing anything electronic or with switches to new systems. Certainly, as the opposition, we'll be watching very carefully to see just how that goes. We look at SAMS, for example, and there were all kinds of problems with that. There were all kinds of problems with eHealth. The new system for children's aid societies—I don't know the actual name—problems with that. I haven't seen a system that has been implemented smoothly so far by the government, so I certainly would be concerned about that.

There have been lots of mines found by people out scratching rocks out on the ground. For example, the big Hemlo gold mine was found by the McKinnons and Larches, traditional prospectors out looking in the bush. That mine, which I happened to tour last December, is right beside Highway 17. This huge gold ore body was there for years and years and found by traditional prospectors.

I was told a story about a mine, the Borden gold project. It was found by Mike Tremblay, a long-time prospector who staked the claim, and then it would come open and he'd restake the claim. He kept on doing that for years and years and was very persistent, and now that is the mine about to open in Chapleau, the Borden Gold project, a mine that's going to be an all-electric mine that was found by a traditional prospector. Hopefully, the traditional prospectors will be used in the exploration or be used to go out, look at the rocks and do their work.

Also in talking to the Ontario Prospectors Association, one of their concerns that was raised to me was a concern that the federal government is going to change the mineral exploration tax incentive that has been place. I believe that's a 15% tax incentive. They're quite concerned that that will be changed.

I know that we have other jurisdictions that are nearby us that allow flow-through shares. Basically, for companies that invest in flow-through shares, it's an incentive to do exploration, and they get money back through that process. Ontario is not competitive with some of our competing jurisdictions. For example, Ontario's rate is 5%, whereas some of our competing jurisdictions—Quebec, I believe, is 15%. So we have a ways to go to be competitive there.

On this topic of being competitive, I should say that Ontario used to be the number one jurisdiction in the world for mining exploration. I believe it was 2002; under a PC government, we were the number one jurisdiction in the world for mining. We've fallen, and I'll come to that, if I have time, in a few minutes.

Some of the government members were talking about diamonds. Yes, Ontario has the De Beers Victor diamond mine near Attawapiskat, which does produce beautiful diamonds—very, very clear, bright diamonds. It's the only diamond operation in Ontario. They have a second ore body that they could develop, and I really hope they are able to develop that, but it's a little iffy right now.

I read recently in the Financial Post that there's great news about a new diamond mine. Unfortunately, it's not in Ontario. I'll read the headline, "Quebec's Plan Nord Yields First Jewel." It goes on at length, and it's very fine print, so I think I'm going to need my glasses for this one, Mr. Speaker. It goes on in great detail about how this mine is going to be so beneficial in Quebec. I'll just quote from it a bit:

"Although Stornoway"—the name of the company—"says financial assistance was crucial in getting Renard operational, the road was one of the most simple but beneficial contributions from Plan Nord.

"In 2012, the government loaned Stornoway \$77 million to complete a 240-kilometre extension of Route 167, giving all-season access by way of the Chibougamau and Mistissini communities."

"Although the Renard mine is built on what is designated as public land, it is considered to be territory of the Cree First Nations.

"The Cree do not have any direct investment and there is no financial compensation for having the Renard mine on the land.

"Chief of the Mistissini Cree Nation, Richard Shecapio, says the community does benefit from training and employment, including business for contractors during the construction, operation and closure of the project. Though the mine's staff come from more than 20 different countries, 92% of workers have come from Quebec, 26% of whom are Mistissini Cree.

"When there's careful consultation with the population, it smooths out the resource development opportunities for companies," Shecapio said, adding that this was the case with Renard.

"When the mine's resources are exhausted, Renard will close. Stornoway says it will leave the airport for the community, along with the access created by Route 167, which Shecapio says could mean more commercial investment as well as easier travel to traditional trap lines."

So the First Nation community is very supportive of the mine, and it seems Quebec is ahead of Ontario with relations with indigenous communities. With the simplicity of the consultation, from what I understand, you approach one organization in the indigenous community, and that's who you do your consultations with.

That's not the case in Ontario. As I mentioned, we have a diamond mine that could open that is in doubt,

and that would be a real shame for Ontario and the Attawapiskat First Nation and others. So I hope it does develop.

1730

In that article, we talked about a road, and that segues into the next topic I wanted to talk about, which is the Ring of Fire. One of the key things that needs to happen in the Ring of Fire is access to the property. It was in 2012 that this road was started. Back in 2012, the government was making a big announcement on the Ring of Fire. It said that thousands of jobs were coming to northern Ontario. It goes on to talk about—this is May 9, 2012: “Cliffs Natural Resources has announced a \$3.3-billion investment to build a chromite mine, transportation corridor and processing facility in northern Ontario’s Ring of Fire that would lead to a new generation of prosperity in the north, with thousands of jobs and new infrastructure.”

It talks about how great it is: “Cliffs Natural Resources has announced it intends to build a \$1.8-billion chromite processing facility in Capreol, near Sudbury. This would employ 450 people during construction, and as many as 450 people when the facility is in operation. Mine and mill development, as well as the construction and operation of transportation infrastructure, could create an additional 750 jobs, plus hundreds of indirect employment opportunities for northern Ontarians and First Nations’ communities.”

There was that big announcement, but we’ve seen very, very little in terms of any real, tangible movement in the Ring of Fire. I first toured it, along with the member for Nipissing, back in August 2011. There was a lot of activity on the ground there, with all kinds of diamond drilling going on. There was a lot of excitement in the air because they thought a mine was going to open relatively soon. That was 2011. We’re in 2016. Certainly, the government, by its announcement, makes it look like the mine was just about to open, yet nothing has happened.

Let’s review some of the steps. First of all, one of the challenges with opening a mine in Ontario is permitting times. For the Ring of Fire, Noront Resources—the minister can correct me on this, but I believe that there’s a time frame that’s in the legislation of how long it’s supposed to take for terms of reference for an environmental assessment. It’s supposed to be months. Well, it took Noront three years to get the terms of reference for an environmental assessment.

The government has taken a number of steps. They created the Ring of Fire Secretariat, which has spent a fair amount of money. I’m not quite sure—and if I have time to get to the Auditor General’s report on the mining section, I’ll talk a bit about that. They spent a fair amount of money. There’s a bit of criticism in the Auditor General’s 2015 report about how that money has been spent, but it hasn’t really accomplished anything.

They have a development corporation that was created to bring the various partners together to build a road or do something. There are basically a few different

bureaucrats on the board of directors, and that’s it. From what I could tell—and the minister can correct me again—I don’t believe they’ve done anything.

The government talks about how they’ve made a framework agreement with Matawa First Nation. It’s an agreement to negotiate. But again, it’s nothing that tangible. In fact, I asked the minister about that last week. We just don’t see anything substantial happening in the Ring of Fire, and it’s very frustrating, because there is great potential.

I have toured quite a few mines. One of the mines I toured last year with a few of my colleagues was Detour Gold, near Cochrane. I don’t know the exact distance, but I think it’s 80 to 100 kilometres, the highway going into Detour Gold. The mine opened in the mid-1980s.

We’re riding on a bus, doing that road, and I’m saying, “Where does this highway go?” It’s an Ontario provincial highway. Where does the highway go? It goes to the mine. The mine opened in the mid-1980s and it’s still operating. There are hundreds of people that live on-site. Millions and millions of dollars of economic activity are being generated from it. Well, who built the road? The provincial government. I believe it would be the Bill Davis government that built that road, and we’re still seeing economic activity from that.

On the Ring of Fire, we’ve seen the government, in three budgets now, talk about the fact that they have \$1 billion committed for infrastructure on the Ring of Fire, but we don’t see any action. We don’t see anything happening. They just spent, I believe, with the federal government, about \$700,000 on a road survey of some kind, and nothing came from that. There was no decision to do anything that came from that.

I know, in talking to companies like Noront—the biggest company that’s in the Ring of Fire—they’d like to build an east-west connection, going northeast from Pickle Lake. That is most beneficial for the indigenous communities in the area, because it picks up a lot of those communities. But more than anything, they’d just like to see the government make some decisions because they’re a company that has money borrowed and has spent hundreds and hundreds of millions of dollars, and their shareholders are only so patient before they aren’t patient anymore. So we need to see some action on that.

I know when I toured Detour Gold mine, again, as we rode out and had a few hours on the bus riding out there, I said, “What is your big issue?” “Our issue is permitting and the delays it takes for permitting.” So there is a lot of work that needs to be done to make Ontario a more attractive place for mining.

You look at the annual survey that’s done of the mining industry by the Fraser Institute—every year they do a survey—and they have the investment attractiveness index that takes both mineral and policy perspective into consideration, and they have the policy perception index, which is a report card to governments on the attractiveness of their mining policies. As they say, back in 2002, we were number one in the world.

Well now, in the most current one, Ontario’s investment attractiveness index—we’re 15th. To give you an

idea, Saskatchewan is second, Quebec is eighth and Yukon is 12th. And on the government policy measure—Ontario policy perception index—we're 31st. We trail Saskatchewan, that's fourth; Alberta, that's seventh; New Brunswick, that's ninth; Manitoba, that's 13th; Newfoundland and Labrador, that's 15th; Nova Scotia, that's 17th; and Quebec, that's 22nd. Not that great a report card, is what I would say. There's a lot more that could be done.

Even talking last week about simple things, like regulations that could make more sense for the new Borden gold mine that's all electric—well, the rules currently state that for the air movement, you have to move a certain amount of volume of air. That's the old-style Ontario regulation that's there. But it's going to be all electric, so they don't need to move that much air. It would make sense that you just measure the quality and instead of a prescriptive regulation, you have one that just sets an objective.

Mr. Speaker, I can see I am out of time. There are quite a number of other things I wanted to talk about, but being out of time, I will give up the floor.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Paul Miller): Questions and comments?

Ms. Jennifer K. French: I am glad, once again, to give my two cents on Bill 39, the Aggregate Resources and Mining Modernization Act, and this time to comment on the remarks given by the member from Parry Sound—Muskoka.

I've done a lot of learning today, and that's part of the fun, I think; it is. It's part of the fun in this Legislature, that we have the opportunity to dig deep, no pun intended—well, pun intended—and to learn. Here we are talking mining and the—

Interjection.

Ms. Jennifer K. French: I know there are no props allowed, but there also shouldn't be wild gesticulation from the member from Niagara Falls.

Anyway, back to the member's comments. I learned a lot about mines, and when we talk about traditional prospectors or electrical mines, there's a lot that I don't know because we don't delve into this in Oshawa. But as I mentioned earlier, we are a part of the industry. When we've got the shipping, the railways and our roadways, and we see infrastructure, building projects, and we certainly see aggregates in use all across our communities.

Something I've been hearing about, that may not be connected to my community, is the Ring of Fire. And affectionately it's deemed—or not affectionately—as the ring of smoke, because as the member said, what we've seen, budget after budget after budget, is money committed to the Ring of Fire, but we haven't seen that action.

1740

Since I've been here, and before I came here, this has been a topic of conversation. It's a topic of conversation for us in the Oshawa area, but in our northern communities, this is not a topic of conversation; this is untapped potential. This is, as the member said, a new generation

of prosperity. This is jobs. This is the future—and I'm out of time. Thank you.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Paul Miller): The Minister of Northern Development and Mines.

Hon. Michael Gravelle: I don't have nearly enough time, Mr. Speaker, but I think what I heard from the member from Parry Sound—Muskoka—thank you very much for your comments and your great commitment to the mining sector, as well. I think you might be supporting the legislation; that's the impression I got, at least in terms of the modernization aspect of it.

Let me just say this: Here we have the mining sector in Ontario being the top jurisdiction for mineral exploration across the country, the top jurisdiction for mineral production across the country—\$10.8 billion in production last year. We employ 26,000 people directly and more than 50,000 in supply and services. So there is no question that the mining sector is moving forward in a very, very positive way, which is why we want this legislation to go forward.

Related to the Ring of Fire, because it's impossible for me not to comment on it: We're talking about a major resource development project in a remote part of the province that has never seen development before, which is why we are so committed to working in partnership with the First Nations that will be most directly impacted by this particular development.

Again, I said it when I was responding to a question last week: If the member opposite and his party and others do not believe that we should be involved in these negotiations, negotiations that began with the Matawa coming to meet with the Premier, myself and Minister Zimmer—if you don't support that, then you should say so.

The bottom line is that we need to get this project right. We need to make sure that we deal with issues related to regional infrastructure, environmental enhancement, environmental monitoring, socio-economic supports and resource revenue-sharing. Those are all things that are on the table that we're taking very, very seriously, and we're absolutely committed to doing that work with the Matawa First Nation.

It's crucial that we get this right. I know that the members opposite actually agree—just, it's easy to be in opposition.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Paul Miller): The member from Lanark—Frontenac—Lennox and Addington.

Mr. Randy Hillier: I beg the minister's indulgence here. I have a slightly different view on his comments. The member from Parry Sound—Muskoka talked about some of these differences. He used the example in Quebec of their Plan Nord. He talked about how quickly they developed it, in conjunction with the native communities in northern Quebec, to get 240 kilometres of road built very quickly and got it done.

I've been in this Legislature for a while. The first time I heard of the Ring of Fire was back in 2010, I believe, in their budget announcement. I also was on the committee hearings travelling in the north under our Far North Act

and the Mining Act amendments. I know the minister remembers those days as well.

Our Far North Act has been an impediment to mining development. Unlike the Quebec Plan Nord, our Far North Act excludes 250,000 square miles of Ontario from any development. It's not just this endless discussion that the minister talks about with the Ring of Fire, even though they are endless discussions. The member from Parry Sound–Muskoka spoke about the three years to develop a terms of reference that was acceptable to this Liberal government. You can't get through the red tape and the obstacles that this Liberal government has put forward.

Yes, we're still producing a lot of mineral activity and mining activity, but we're not getting new mines in this province. That's what the member was talking about and what the Fraser Institute report shows: We've gone from number 1 down to 31.

Minister, we've got to get this job done. We need to get the Ring of Fire. It is jobs; it is prosperity.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Paul Miller): Questions and comments?

Mr. Michael Mantha: I always enjoy being in the House with the member from Parry Sound–Muskoka. I know that my staff and his staff have worked very closely having those discussions. I send this challenge out to the minister: Next time you go out to some of these functions within the mining sector, bring us along. We wouldn't mind going for the trip. We would have a really wholesome discussion when we're talking about issues.

When it comes to some of the points that the member brought forward, I too have heard those concerns from the prospectors. At the end of the day, I think we're still going to need those individuals going out there and actually putting that hammer to rock, making those once-in-a-lifetime discoveries. There are ways that we're going to be able to bring those individuals along, but we really need to look at those concerns as really frank.

Here are a few suggestions, particularly on the mining aspect of it. We've had this \$1-billion commitment from the government for a very long time. It's been copied and pasted over several budgets now. We need to actually spend those dollars, and that's what the member was raising. In order to get to the Ring of Fire, we need to have these infrastructure investments paid for and done. We have that money, apparently, so let's do it. Let's build that road to those First Nation communities, and let's get there.

The other thing that industry has been asking for, particularly the Ontario Chamber of Commerce, is that you provide a consistent list of engagement with the projects that are going to be discussed. What I mean by that is that the industry is going out and all of the time they're getting new individuals that they have to consult with. That is not appropriate for them to develop a business plan and move forward.

The member talked about the flow-through shares and the credits that are here in Ontario. He was absolutely right: Ontario is at 5%; Manitoba is at 30%; Saskatchewan is at 10%; and British Columbia is 20%. We have a lot of work to do and an opportunity to help.

The resource-revenue-sharing formula: Why haven't we had that discussion? That's something that we could have moved on for a very long time. I know we're doing it—we say we're doing it, but it's not happening.

Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Apparently, I'm out of time.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Paul Miller): The member from Parry Sound–Muskoka has two minutes.

Mr. Norm Miller: Thank you to the member from Oshawa, the Minister of Northern Development and Mines, the member from Lanark–Frontenac–Lennox and Addington, and the member from Algoma–Manitoulin.

The member from Lanark–Frontenac–Lennox and Addington talked about the Far North Act. That is a great impediment. I believe that it's 225,000 square kilometres that's basically off limits for any sort of economic benefit for people who live in the north.

In the short time I have left, I wanted to just highlight the Auditor General's report from 2015, where she talks about some of the deficiencies in mining. She goes on to say, "Our audit found that the ministry has not been effective in encouraging mineral development in the province."

On the Ring of Fire, she says, "However, the area is still not close to being ready for production since its discovery in 2008, and we found the ministry has no detailed plan or timeline for developing the region."

She says that the "ministry's marketing strategies may be ineffective"; that the "ministry is slow to make geosciences information available to mining industry"; that a "lack of clarity on duty to consult with aboriginal communities slows investment"; and that there is "little infrastructure development of the Ring of Fire to date." She goes on to say, "No minerals yet extracted from the Ring of Fire," and that mine closure plans lack sufficient technical detail. It goes on and on and on from that.

I would recommend that the government go back and look at that 2015 Auditor General's report. There's lots of good, constructive criticism on how we can improve things in the province of Ontario and move back to being what we once were: the number one jurisdiction in the world for mining activity.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Paul Miller): Further debate?

Mr. Wayne Gates: It's always a pleasure to rise in the House and speak about an issue that is very important for our province, Bill 39, the Aggregate Resources and Mining Modernization Act. It's an important piece of legislation that follows up on the Aggregate Resources Act review that was launched in 2011 and then re-launched in 2012.

With the initial review of the ARA that was launched in 2011, the government made significant promises about the changes that were coming to the ARA. The government promised that they would strengthen oversight and environmental accountability; that they would provide more and better information while ensuring greater participation in the mining claims process; and that they

would implement a new system of increased and equalized fees and royalties. Unfortunately, I now find myself standing to speak on a bill that will begin to implement some of the promised changes five years after these promises were first made, but I suppose better late than never. If that is the case, then we need to ask ourselves a simple question: Does this act actually fulfill the promises that were made by the Liberal government five years ago?

1750

Well, Mr. Speaker, let's look at the first promise I mentioned. Does Bill 39 actually provide for stronger oversight and greater environmental accountability when it comes to aggregates and mining in the province of Ontario? I'd like to be able to stand here today and say yes, but I just don't think I can. You see, Mr. Speaker, it turns out that the answer to that is not so straightforward, unfortunately.

Certainly this bill does have some good provisions in that regard. The bill would allow the minister to set aside an area of crown-owned aggregate or topsoil where no permit could be issued. I think we can all see how that could be an important tool for protecting sensitive environments, but there is nothing given about what the area will be set aside for. This is important to hear. Is the Niagara Escarpment going to be protected, or will the minister decide that it's okay for mining to take place there?

The bill would allow for increased authority to make regulations with respect to record-keeping, as well as site rehabilitation. Again, you can see how this provision could be an important tool for protecting environmentally sensitive areas, but still there are no specifics given about how this provision will be used.

Will site rehabilitation be improved to a point that the land is once again usable for farming, or will site rehabilitation mean something less than that? I think that's key.

Mr. Speaker, if you can believe it, those are good provisions. We have to make known whether or not those provisions will be used to protect the environment to the full extent—are they good ones when it comes to strengthening oversight and environmental accountability? What does that mean? It means there are unfortunately a large number of issues with regard to strengthening oversight and environmental accountability that are not addressed in this bill.

For example, when the review of the ARA was launched in 2011—again, going back five years—there were a number of stakeholder groups and organizations who were very concerned about the impact of mega-quarries on surrounding prime farmland and nearby water sources. Those groups were concerned that the mega-quarry was going to have a serious negative impact on their lives and their livelihoods, and they wanted to know that the government took them seriously. In response to that, the government launched its review of the ARA, and so one would hope that this act that came out of that review would address those important concerns.

Mr. Speaker, does it? This bill absolutely does not offer a clear solution to those groups and individuals who have fought so hard for greater restrictions on large quarry operations in sensitive areas like the Niagara Escarpment. You see, in Niagara and elsewhere in the Niagara Escarpment, we rely on our farmers as a big part of our economy. I hope all the Liberals are listening to this: In Niagara and elsewhere in the Niagara Escarpment, we rely on our farmers as a big part of our economy. We know we have some of the best soil in the world for growing fruits and vegetables, and we are so proud of the work our farmers do to protect that land. It would create a serious negative impact on my region and many other areas across the province if we start giving up prime land for other uses. The farmers in our riding do an incredible job, incredible work. They work on lands that have often been in the family for generations—their parents and their parents. I believe we need to protect that.

Site rehabilitation in these regions isn't the answer either, despite the bill's suggestion otherwise. When you have a piece of land with really high-quality soil that you can use to farm, there is a simple truth: Rehabilitation after aggregate extraction usually doesn't cut it. For the most part, that rehabilitation just can't bring the soil back to the quality that it was before, and when you've lost farmland, you never—I'm going to repeat this: When you lose farmland, you never get it back. That's important, and we're seeing that right across the province.

The problem with strengthening oversight and the environmental accountability through Bill 39 doesn't stop there. This bill does not require a needs assessment to help balance the interests when land use decisions are being made about quarry applications.

This bill is silent on maximizing the use of recycled aggregates and, further, recycled aggregates are included in the annual tonnage removal limits, creating possible—and this is interesting—disincentives for their use.

Finally, this bill does not require an environmental assessment for new sites. Think about that, Mr. Speaker; you understand that quite well. Instead, it calls for new-site impact studies. There's a big difference. I'm sure the government will argue that this is much the same as an EA. There is one simple fact that shows how it isn't, and I'm going to read this out: The approval authority will not be the Ministry of the Environment and Climate Change but the Ministry of Natural Resources. How can you possibly expect people to believe that something is an environmental assessment when the Ministry of the Environment isn't even involved? It doesn't make a lot of sense to me.

Clearly, this bill is mixed, at best, when it comes to strengthening oversight and environmental accountability. I really do hope that some of those gaps can be filled at committee. That's why we have committee.

I know there are companies out there in this industry who take their environmental stewardship responsibility very seriously. I'm going to talk about one from Niagara.

Take Walker Industries, which is based in Thorold but is known all over Niagara, as an example. Walker is a big company that has been in operation since 1887. They have a number of different divisions, including an aggregates division.

Interjection.

Mr. Wayne Gates: This is interesting: I know any good friend from St. Catharines will want to hear this.

Walker Industries operates under a principle they call Earth 1. Think about that. This principle guides all the decisions they make as a company, to ensure that those decisions seriously consider environmental impact before they are finalized.

As part of this commitment to environmental sustainability, Walker Aggregates was actually able to turn an old quarry into a fully functional vineyard. Walker Industries formed a partnership with the University of Guelph to study the viability of transforming the mined-out quarry lands into a vineyard. By the summer of 2000, they had

planted 10 acres on slopes carefully graded to support the vines.

I know I've only got a minute to wrap up, but I want to get this out before I do.

Today, Vineland Quarries has about 20 acres of high-quality vines, which go to create some of the best wines in the world. The quarry provides the only south-facing slope in the Niagara region, creating a microclimate that supports a variety of grapes that would be a challenge to grow elsewhere in the world.

I'll stop there, seeing as it's 6 o'clock. Thank you very much.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Paul Miller): Thank you to the member for Niagara Falls.

Second reading debate deemed adjourned.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Paul Miller): It being 6 o'clock, this House stands adjourned until 9 tomorrow morning.

The House adjourned at 1759.

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Vanthof, John (NDP)	Timiskaming-Cochrane	
Vernile, Daiene (LIB)	Kitchener Centre / Kitchener-Centre	
Walker, Bill (PC)	Bruce-Grey-Owen Sound	
Wilson, Jim (PC)	Simcoe-Grey	Opposition House Leader / Leader parlementaire de l'opposition officielle
Wong, Soo (LIB)	Scarborough-Agincourt	Deputy Speaker / Vice-présidente
Wynne, Hon. / L'hon. Kathleen O. (LIB)	Don Valley West / Don Valley-Ouest	Minister of Intergovernmental Affairs / Ministre des Affaires intergouvernementales
Zimmer, Hon. / L'hon. David (LIB)		Premier / Première ministre
Vacant	Renfrew-Nipissing-Pembroke	Leader, Liberal Party of Ontario / Chef du Parti libéral de l'Ontario
	Elgin-Middlesex-London	
	Willowdale	
Vacant	Niagara West-Glanbrook / Niagara-Ouest-Glanbrook	Minister of Indigenous Relations and Reconciliation / Ministre des Relations avec les Autochtones et de la Réconciliation
	Ottawa-Vanier	

**STANDING COMMITTEES OF THE LEGISLATIVE ASSEMBLY
COMITÉS PERMANENTS DE L'ASSEMBLÉE LÉGISLATIVE**

Standing Committee on Estimates / Comité permanent des budgets des dépenses

Chair / Présidente: Cheri DiNovo
Vice-Chair / Vice-présidente: Monique Taylor
Bob Delaney, Cheri DiNovo
Joe Dickson, Han Dong
Michael Harris, Sophie Kiwala
Arthur Potts, Todd Smith
Monique Taylor
Committee Clerk / Greffier: Eric Rennie

Standing Committee on Finance and Economic Affairs / Comité permanent des finances et des affaires économiques

Chair / Président: Peter Z. Milczyn
Vice-Chair / Vice-présidente: Ann Hoggarth
Yvan Baker, Toby Barrett
Han Dong, Victor Fedeli
Catherine Fife, Ann Hoggarth
Cristina Martins, Peter Z. Milczyn
Lou Rinaldi
Committee Clerk / Greffier: Eric Rennie

Standing Committee on General Government / Comité permanent des affaires gouvernementales

Chair / Président: Grant Crack
Vice-Chair / Vice-président: Lou Rinaldi
Yvan Baker, Mike Colle
Grant Crack, Lisa Gretzky
Ann Hoggarth, Harinder Malhi
Jim McDonell, Lou Rinaldi
Lisa M. Thompson
Committee Clerk / Greffière: Sylwia Przedzniecki

Standing Committee on Government Agencies / Comité permanent des organismes gouvernementaux

Chair / Présidente: Cristina Martins
Vice-Chair / Vice-présidente: Daiene Vernile
James J. Bradley, Raymond Sung Joon Cho
Wayne Gates, Monte Kwinter
Amrit Mangat, Cristina Martins
Randy Pettapiece, Shafiq Qaadri
Daiene Vernile
Committee Clerk / Greffière: Sylwia Przedzniecki

Standing Committee on Justice Policy / Comité permanent de la justice

Chair / Président: Shafiq Qaadri
Vice-Chair / Vice-président: Lorenzo Berardinetti
Lorenzo Berardinetti, Mike Colle
Bob Delaney, Randy Hillier
Michael Mantha, Arthur Potts
Shafiq Qaadri, Laurie Scott
Daiene Vernile
Committee Clerk / Greffier: Christopher Tyrell

Standing Committee on the Legislative Assembly / Comité permanent de l'Assemblée législative

Chair / Président: Monte McNaughton
Vice-Chair / Vice-président: Steve Clark
Granville Anderson, Robert Bailey
James J. Bradley, Steve Clark
Vic Dhillon, Sophie Kiwala
Michael Mantha, Monte McNaughton
Soo Wong
Committee Clerk / Greffier: Trevor Day

Standing Committee on Public Accounts / Comité permanent des comptes publics

Chair / Président: Ernie Hardeman
Vice-Chair / Vice-présidente: Lisa MacLeod
John Fraser, Ernie Hardeman
Percy Hatfield, Monte Kwinter
Lisa MacLeod, Harinder Malhi
Peter Z. Milczyn, Julia Munro
Arthur Potts
Committee Clerk / Greffière: Valerie Quioc Lim

Standing Committee on Regulations and Private Bills / Comité permanent des règlements et des projets de loi d'intérêt privé

Chair / Président: Ted McMeekin
Vice-Chair / Vice-président: Joe Dickson
Lorenzo Berardinetti, Grant Crack
Joe Dickson, Jennifer K. French
Ted McMeekin, Mario Sergio
Bill Walker, Soo Wong
Jeff Yurek
Committee Clerk / Greffier: Christopher Tyrell

Standing Committee on Social Policy / Comité permanent de la politique sociale

Chair / Président: Peter Tabuns
Vice-Chair / Vice-président: Jagmeet Singh
Granville Anderson, Lorne Coe
Vic Dhillon, John Fraser
Amrit Mangat, Gila Martow
Ted McMeekin, Jagmeet Singh
Peter Tabuns
Committee Clerk / Greffier: Katch Koch